

THE  
EMIGRANT SHIP

W. CLARK RUSSELL



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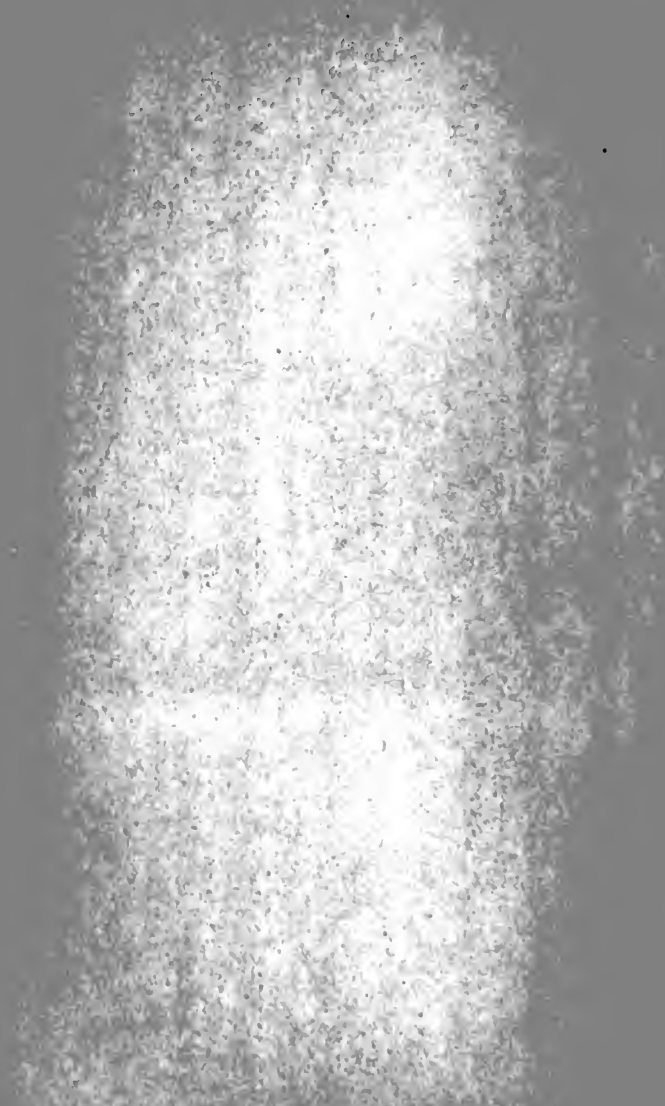
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# THE EMIGRANT SHIP

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF

"THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR," "JACK'S COURTSHIP," ETC.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. III.

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# THE EMIGRANT SHIP.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A SAILOR'S TOMBSTONE.

FEELING exhausted, I entered the pantry for a dram of brandy, then sat at the table to rest. But I was not allowed to be long alone. After ten minutes, Brigstock and Harding arrived, and the former asked me to give them the place of the ship at noon. This I did, and wanting to hear more of the man Bull, feeling equal to a short chat, though not to the like of such exertion as I was fresh from, I said—

“Is Harding there,” and here I nodded at him contemptuously, “acting as second mate still?”

"Why, yes," answered Brigstock, turning to look at Harding.

"I had thought you'd give Bull the post. He was used to the duties of it in that schooner you took him from."

"He's welcome to the bruised job for me," said Harding.

"*Now*, matey!" said Brigstock, in a tone of reproof.

"Oh, for my part," said I, significantly, "I'm for leaving well alone. You can look after the ship as well as another, Mr. Harding, and the men of your watch know, and are used to you. Is Bull going to make a settler to please you?"

"He took to the scheme like a babe to a pap-spoon, when I talked to him," answered Brigstock. "We'll want tradesmen, and he's handy at his needle; knows how to build a house, too, so he says. His father was a mason. He hain't exactly what you might call heducated, but he can read, and his mind's 'stored with useful knowledge. He's knocked about amongst the South Sea Hislands, and's told us of a place we're

willing you shall try for, sir. He was aboard a colonial schooner, a-cruising on some surveying job, and they brought up in a bay, where he was one of a party of armed men as went ashore along with the lieutenant or mate. There was ne'er a soul to be seen, but the hisland was a perfect Heden, one of them spots," he continued, with a grave, slow smile, "where yer'd hexpect to find a Heve, all gold with hair down to her ankles, a-picking happles, with Hadam a-taking his ease, looking on, and nothen in the shape of a serpent anywhere about, if it warn't the sea-snake."

"Can he fix the situation?" said I.

"He can name some islands a-lying on the same line of latitood," he answered.

"Why, then," I exclaimed, feeling my face brisk with a sudden freshening of my spirits, "you've stolen your man for some purpose, and he may thank you yet for the robbery."

"I believe he's a good man," said Brigstock, "and that, taking him all round, he'll answer as a Father. He's already given me

one or two first-class ideas as a contribution to my scheme of a constitootion. All I complain of is his choice of a pardner. I don't say Soosie Murch ain't honest, and the likes of that. I've talked with her, and don't find no ballast of mind, no kentledge of principles, nothen to keep her from capsizing in some sudden gust of passion. Yer know what I mean? She's wan of them feathery characters as tosses like a bubble on the froth of the passing hour," said he, bringing out his hour with a sounding *h*. "But they may find each other out, afore it's too late. There's more besides our pardners willing to settle."

"I'm too tired to talk now," said I. "Send Bull to me, soon."

Presently I felt too poorly, however, to see Bull; and, bidding Gouger tell him I'd talk to him another time, I entered my cabin, and lay down. The ship was in good hands, so far as practical seamanship went. I had no fears for her with Brigstock or Harding on the look-out. The long exposure in the open boat, all the physical and mental tor-



ments I had suffered whilst adrift, were still telling upon me. Then, again, there was the strain of having to talk to the men; the obligation of conversing collectedly on such matters as Bull and the island scheme, with Brigstock and Harding, after their treatment of me, was a torment in itself, violent enough to strain the spirits, even though health had been at its highest.

I fell asleep, and when I awoke, found Kate at my side. The sun was setting. I had slept heavily as a drugged man, right through the afternoon.

"Have I been ill?" said I, wondering to see Kate. "What's the matter?"

"Brigstock heard you were lying down," said she; "and, fancying you were unwell, he asked me to sit with you."

"I'm quite well," I answered, sitting up. And now I felt so, and indeed was, for that afternoon's sleep had kedged me to my old mooring-buoys once more. "But why must I fall ill to get you aft. Why won't you come and live in the cabin, and eat at the table with me?"

"No," she said, decisively, with some colour.

"You promised to call me Charlie?"

"I may learn to do so before we part. I take after my father, who was slow in being familiar with people."

"Where is it we're to part at, Kate?"

"Sydney," she answered, looking at me.

"How do you know I may not apply for a footman's situation in the family that takes you as governess?"

"You lurch too much in your walk to make a footman. You'd spill the soup, and break things," said she, beginning to laugh, and, getting up, she handed me a hair-brush.

I took the hint, and brushed my hair in the glass, whilst she stood at the door, as though going.

"Do you think we shall ever get to Sydney, Kate?"

"I do, Charlie," she answered, laughing at my face in the looking-glass.

"And so do I. This ship is meant for me. Brigstock, here, knew that when he

stole me. Fletcher of Bristol knew that when he tried to kill me. And the gig knew it when she scented her mother in the dark, where she lay near the moon, and brought me back to be nursed by you. They don't yet imagine at Blathford we're together."

"How should they? They don't even know I've left England."

Spying a laniard round her neck, I put my hand upon it, and pulled the boatswain's whistle out of her breast.

"Have you forgotten the tunes I taught you?"

"No."

"Will you teach them to Alice Perry?"

"Why to her?" she asked.

"Because she's my hope in the direction of making sailors of the women. You'll be seeing her in man's clothes some day, springing aloft like a monkey. Others must do that, if I'm to carry this ship to safety without men, and it's my policy to kindle a flaming ambition in her. She wants to learn that whistle, Kate, and wear it, and

let her," said I, laughing. "You'll teach her."

"I don't think I will. I'd rather not," and, as she said this, she pulled off her hat, whipped the laniard over her head, and held it out to me.

"Do you want to break my heart?" said I. "You must wear this," and I took the laniard, and passed the bight of it over her hair, "and teach Alice Perry the music you remember, then let her wear the pipe, and be called bo'sun. What's it to you? Aren't you my chief mate? Or, as the rating's termed, 'Only Mate'?"

This brought a great deal of red into her face, and her eyes showed her heart, though her mouth was a little hard. The port-hole was scarlet with sunset, but the light was fast dimming with evening shadow.

"Kate, you'll help me?"

"I'll do anything you want," she replied.

"I may find you twenty different berths between this and Sydney. Don't growl like a vicious sailor when you're shifted."

"Alice Perry's not an agreeable person to have anything to do with."

"But she'll make a good seaman, and a splendid example for the others. So you'll teach her to pipe, Kate?"

"I'll try."

"And when she can pipe, you'll give her the whistle."

"Very well. But where shall I teach her?"

"Bring her aft on the poop whenever you choose."

She put on her hat, and I followed her to the cuddy-door, vexed by what I considered the ridiculous fastidiousness that sundered us.

This evening, going on deck in the second dog-watch, feeling very much refreshed, and, as I have said, well again, on passing through the companion into the starry gloom—it was some time after seven—I heard the sound of men and women singing on the forecastle. Their blended voices swelled strong and sweet in the wind. I don't know what they sang, but the melody was wild and fine, after that hymnal kind which some few years

since was the rage in this country. I stood listening, very well pleased with the singing. There might have been twenty-five or thirty females, besides eight or ten of the men; so they were not all partners who sang. Had they been drilled for a month, they could not have kept better time. The gloom of the night was on the face of the sea, and the stars were plentiful over our mastheads, with few visible clouds, though now and again a wink of dumb lightning down to leeward threw up a terraced coast of vapour, low and sinking. The strong breeze of the morning was gone. It was now a royal wind, the ship under all plain sail, the yards braced a little forwards on the starboard tack, but the darkling hollows of the clothes, whose yearning faces were pallid with star-shine, stood hard and still, like shells, and the swelling fore-castle chorus found an echo in them, to the height, indeed, of the dim main-royal, as I fancied; so that, what with the singing, and the delicate duplication of it aloft, and the quick whistlings in the rigging when the ship came to windward, with a

noise of dull thunder in the underrun of the sea; and what with the gloom and the arrow-straight wake of light astern, and the dark immensity *beyond*, where the flickering shimmer of the furrow vanished—the concert was more impressive than anything of the sort I can recollect.

Stepping aft, I observed a large figure at the wheel, and, on drawing close to look at the compass, I saw it was Bull.

“So,” said I, anxious to have a talk with this man, “you are regularly on the ship’s articles, I see.”

“It’s all the same to a sailor where he is, sir,” he answered, handling the wheel with that grace of certainty, that ease of precision, which is the delight of every skipper’s eye, though not one sailor in a hundred has it. “But I wish, when Mr. Brigstock stole me, he’d stolen my clothes too.”

“There are plenty of slops aboard.”

“Yes, sir.”

I then asked him the name of his schooner, where she was bound, and so on; and presently proceeded thus—

“I suppose you’ve heard I was kidnapped as you were?”

“Oh yes, they gave me the yarn straight enough. It’s a plan as ’ud make Mr. Brigstock’s fortune, if he could get in with the right parties.”

“What do you mean?”

“Over-insure a ship, and start Mr. Brigstock after her in a smart, weatherly schooner to steal her navigators out of her, as you and me was stole, sir. It ’ud be safer than the casting-away lay.”

I guessed by this that Brigstock had told him of the *Hebe*.

“How old are you?”

“I don’t know for sure; not fur off five and twenty, I dare say.”

I could have sworn he’d never see five and thirty again.

“You fancy Brigstock’s scheme of a settlement?”

“Why, yes, when there’s such a lot of nice gals to choose a wife from.”

“Have you a wife ashore?”

“Every sailor’s bound to have a wife



somewhere, sir," he replied, and I saw him, by the lifting sheen of the binnacle-lamp, grinning with all his might.

"You should prove useful to the young colony. Brigstock tells me you can build, and stitch, and the deuce knows what else. Where's that island you've talked to them about?"

"D'yer know Hercules Island?"

"No; but if it's on the chart, I'll soon hear of it."

"Well, the island I mean is about eighty mile to the east'ard of Hercules Island."

"North or South Pacific?"

"South."

"A fine island?"

"Up to the hammer. One of them islands which, if rightly wrote about, would fill every South Seaman with stowaway boys. A beautiful mountain amidships, lovely shady forests, plenty of fruit trees, and fish big as salmon and sweet as trout." He smacked his powerful lips. "A lovelly stream of water hissin' from the mountain, with a fresh-water

lake and lagoon big enough to berth more than the Thames Docks 'ud hold."

"It's a fine island."

"Ay. The men's got to find out what life's like in such a place. Talk o' sailing! Yer don't want no clothes, and that's all the roof a man needs," said he, pointing up. "Yer've got nothen to do but drink cava and eat yaller poe and cocoa sponge, you and your wife wropped up in tappa, and the little uns dandies in the green kilt o' the ti leaf."

"You seem to know all about it," said I, laughing, whilst I thought to myself, what better man than this to harden the fellows forward there in their resolution? "How long is it since you were off the island?"

"Five years, sir."

"It may be peopled—taken possession of by this time."

"That's to be seen, but I doubt it," he answered. "There's too many of the likes of that island a-calling for settlers down in them parts to suppose that it's been took and built upon since I was there."

I left him and walked slowly towards the break of the poop. It was now quite dark, but the radiance of the lunar dawn was in the eastern sky. All this while they had been singing upon the forecastle, but just then a solitary female voice arose; a harsher, coarser, more screaming voice I never heard. The 'tweendecks' fiddle accompanied it. The ship grew as vile as a slum with that noise, particularly at moments when the horrible voice screeched through sounds of laughter and clapping. It was some comic song the woman sang, and I wondered if the fiddler who accompanied the vulgar, cat-yowled wash was the modest-looking, slender young lady who had sat on the beams when they danced.

Harding, at the head of the poop-ladder, was talking to his partner, Sarah Salmon, who was halfway up the steps. Neither perceived me. The moon rose, and I stood near them watching her. She floated, barred with black lines of cloud; which put a wild fancy of William Blake's into my head; that she was like a monstrous

tiger burning amongst the trees of a giant forest.

Harding and his "pardner" stopped in their talk to view her, or to listen to another song that some clear, low, and rather sweet contralto was singing. Presently the pardner spoke.

"Why, yes, my dear," said he, "of course it has. My opinion is the moon's got more influence than the sun, and it's out an' away more useful, as I recollect an Irish sailor once arguing, for it gives light at night, when it's dark, whereas the sun shines in the day, when there's plenty of light."

The pardner laughed and then spoke, and Joe Harding said—

"Why, sartinly. I'll larn yer what the moon's influence is. It tarns fish and meat. It blinds yer, if yer sleep in its light, and so warps yer that you look like a flat-fish; mad folks are always took worse at the full, which in Hafrica'll kill newly littered young a-lying at the mother's side. Cut bamboos at dark o' moon, and they last a dozen years; cut 'em at full, and they'll not sarve a twelve-

month. Why, it works in your very 'air and nails, Sarah. Cut your 'air and nails 'twixt new and old moon, and they'll grow as fast agin as when they're cut at other times."

Here he looked round and saw me, on which I walked away, laughing in my sleeve to think of the sour earnestness with which the old dog was entering upon his pardner's education, and of the subjects he chose; and I also wondered how Mrs. Harding, whom he had left at home, did.

I went into the cuddy, where the lamp was shining brightly, and fetching a chart of the South Pacific, opened and pored upon it. Hercules Island was indicated distinctly enough, but eastwards no land was charted within or at the distance named by Bull. I was not surprised. If the island had no name, it would not be shown. Commodore Wilkes had done grand work in those waters, but the results achieved by his expedition were not to be found in any degree of fulness in the British charts of that age.

However, I was glad to assume that such an island as Bull described was to be met with

in  $23^{\circ}$  S. latitude, and  $125^{\circ}$  W. longitude. It put a place upon the chart for me to steer for. It furnished a sharp and satisfying definition to the motive of this queer voyage. Above all, it was in the South Pacific; so that, if found and approved, then, when the crew had gone ashore, the ship would be left within an easy month's sail of Sydney, New South Wales, in the bland and mild Pacific, in the finest climate in the world, under conditions of weather which might not require me to slacken a brace or start a sheet from one week's end to another.

I was on deck at seven next morning, and walked the poop whilst the men washed down. All had been quiet during the night. I had slept soundly, had visited the deck twice only, and my spirits were a very dance of the heart as I looked about me this morning, admiring afresh the handsome little vessel I was in command of blowing over the blue sea under sails of milky softness. There was a ship on the quarter—a streak of bulwark rail on the horizon, and three spires, standing north.

The breeze was a quiet wind, but the chill of the night was still in it, spite of the warm splendour in the east. Everything looked on fire with that light. The sea blazed under it; a lovely glory it was, with its delicate pink and the azure of the sea sifting into the brightness. Our wet decks flashed in flames as the vessel lazily lifted with the long swell; every shroud and spar was silver-veined.

The men worked quietly, with a will; they hove the water along, scrubbed hard, and seldom spoke. Their behaviour was the queerest part of all this experience to me, the most surprising, incredible passage of it. I heartily hoped Bull would not corrupt the fellows. He had been put, I think—I am not clear—in Harding's watch, and these men washing down were in Brigstock's. A very few women were on deck; most of the girls usually kept below till the planks had been scrubbed.

Brigstock, who was on the main-deck, seeing me on the poop, came up, and said he'd like to know if they might kill a pig

that day? He added the people hadn't had a fresh mess since Dr. Rolt's time.

I answered that, for my part, they might kill all there was, and gorge themselves from out the hencoop and from under the long-boat.

"I'm not here to interfere," said I, "short of stopping what I may consider bad for the general safety. I prefer to leave the crew to you, Mr. Brigstock, merely requiring obedience when the ship's work is to be done. A more orderly set of men I never sailed with; I recognize your influence, and wonder at and admire it."

This I spoke with a sincerity he could not fail to observe. One of his slow smiles travelled up his long face, but he made no remark.

"What sort of a man is Bull?" I asked.

"He seems all right."

"How runs his talk, taking it all round?"

"Why, he's plenty to say for himself. Seen more'n most of us, more'n even me. His mind's got a bit of a list with strong language, but," said he, looking at me very



gravely, "I never lose a chance to give him a 'and in restoring of his intellectuals, and he'll sit trim enough by-and-by—trim enough by-and-by," he repeated, sinking his voice to a murmur.

"You allow no loose talk in your fok'sle?"

"No. We're all for putting a stop to it. My mates understand they're to be Founders, Fathers, and Examples. There's no keeping of a young settlement together unless you take turn upon turn with morals, binding it tight with the lashing of principles."

"Sort of human faggot in a glorified state," said I.

"Ha!" he answered, "that's about the himage, Glorified faggot. I'll stow that." And he smiled gravely, whilst he muttered, "Sort of human faggot—Glorified state."

"It's fortunate that that Bull isn't loose," said I. "Sailors are not renowned for constancy, and here's a shipload of women, Mr. Brigstock."

He stroked the air slowly and solemnly with his hand, as though he was putting a man to sleep, whilst he said, "You needn't

fear for that there Bull. It was two days afore he could make up his mind to choose a pardner. He says he never had no fancy for women himself. He don't seem to believe they're the same sort of people as men. I've argued seriously with him on that point, for to deny that women aren't got no souls is to be a Turk, which Bull aren't by all the way from Constantinople to Limehouse."

At this moment, the fellow at the wheel called to us. I looked, and he pointed to the lee bow. Brigstock crossed with me to the lee rail, and in a moment we saw a small black object in the dazzle of the waters, about a mile ahead. Seeing Gouger on the quarter-deck, I told him to fetch me the telescope, and now, when I looked through the tubes, the black speck was resolved into a cross upon a platform, fitted to what resembled a couple of small casks.

I was much struck by the appearance of the thing, and supposed it a beacon or rude ocean signal that had gone adrift or been lost by wreck. I called to the fellow at the wheel to shift his helm for it by a point or

two, and we bore slowly down, the women beginning to come up and cluster on the bulwark rails at the news that there was something unusual in sight, and half a dozen seamen looking at it on the forecastle head.

I soon made out that it was some kind of roughly-put-together memorial. The telescope was powerful, and I distinguished, without deciphering, an inscription upon the horizontal arms or beam of the cross. I told Brigstock there was writing upon the thing, and ordered him to call hands aft to the maintop-sail-brace, as I intended to heave-to. Within a quarter of an hour the yard was backed, and we had come to a halt, lightly rolling, with the cross within a pistol-shot of the lee bow. But though I kept the telescope bearing upon it, the thing so wobbled and waved, twisted and danced in the hurry of ripples which wrinkled the rounds of the swell, that I could make nothing of the chiselled inscription.

The cross was formed of two white planks. It was secured to a platform of two similar planks, lashed, nailed, or otherwise fastened

to a brace of casks, which were probably weighted under water, or such rolling bottoms must speedily have capsized that whole little show of topweight.

“Can yer make out what’s wrote upon it?” asked Brigstock, in a solemn voice, and looking at the thing with a long, earnest face.

“No. There’s but one way of finding out. Who of the crew can read and write?”

“Lucky’s wan as can.”

By “Lucky” he meant Luke Wambold, the ship’s cook.

“He’ll do, then. Get that port quarter-boat cleared, and send Wambold along with a couple of hands to read the inscription.”

Whilst the boat was being got ready, I fetched a pencil and a sheet of paper, and gave them to Wambold, who was busy at the boat, desiring him to copy exactly the inscription upon the cross. Two seamen got into the boat. As Wambold entered, all being ready to lower away, a woman on the main-deck shrieked out, and an instant after Nan Honeyball, without any cover on her head, her hair blowing loose as she ran, and her

face as red as blood, came rushing up the poop-ladder, and along the deck, shrieking out—

“What are you going to do to him? You let ’im be! He’s my man. What’s he done that you’re sending him away?” and then she yelled, “Lucky, jump out, or else take me along too.”

At this there was a great burst of laughter. Brigstock, in his deep voice, exclaimed, “It’s all right, Miss Nan. It’s all right, I tell yer. There ain’t going to be no separation.”

“Lucky, come out! Don’t trust ’em,” screamed Nan.

“There’s nothen to be afraid of, my heart,” bawled Wambold. “Just a-going to that heffigy over there, to tell the capt’n what’s wrote upon it.”

“Lower away!” I cried.

The boat sank, and Wambold vanished. Nan fled to the rail to watch the descent of her sweetheart to the water.

“Here I stop till you come back,” she shrieked.

“If that ain’t devotion, my eyes ain’t

twins," murmured Brigstock, standing close beside me. "That's what I like to see. That's the kind of sperrit I want to encourage amongst my people. Them's the sort of females," said he, surveying with great admiration Nan's square, lumpish shape, as she overhung the rail, "who, whether yer call 'em mothers, or whether yer call 'em wives, are a-going to make a first-class job of my constitootion."

"A faggot," said I—"I mean a stick of your faggot."

"Ah," he exclaimed, with a sigh of deep relish. "Yer may talk of yer ladies, and yer may talk of yer gents. I've got nothen to say agin refinement, which is the houtcome of civilization, and means, p'raps, overbehaving of yourself, for you see there's more bowing, and taffy a-going to it, false grins and greased-boot politeness, than society stands for to need; but for the hestablishment of a constitootion, where civilization's got to begin, and where the hissue may be dukes and earls—though Gord knows when—I grant *that*—give me your Nans and your

Hannahs," and he sent a slow look forward in search of Miss Cobbs.

I stepped aside to watch the cross, and see what the men did. The boat drew close; Wambold stood up, pencil and paper in hand; he and the cross leaped together on the jump of the sea. I saw him peering with many jerking movements of his head. He then looked round at the ship, peered again at the inscription, looked round again, peered yet afresh, and seemed to me to manifest by his postures the utmost astonishment and incredulity.

I sprang on to the rail in a fit of impatience and excitement.

"Boat ahoy!" I roared, "bear a hand with that copying job, d'ye hear?"

But it occupied the fellow twenty minutes in writing what he read, which looked as though Brigstock had overrated his parts. The boat then returned, and Wambold came over the side. Nan swept up to him with outstretched arms, and hugged him to her heart.

"None o' that—none o' that," shouted

Brigstock, in tones of disgust and dismay, while peal upon peal of laughter came from the crowds of women along the bulwarks. "Miss Honeyball, away yer go."

"What's the inscription?" said I, and I took the paper from Wambold.

The writing was a vile, faint scrawl. I was some time in making it out, then read aloud—

*"To the memory of John Wambold. Aged fourteen. Carved by his sorrowful father, boatswain ship Abydos. Commended to God, the Sailor's Hope."*

"A sailor's grave," I exclaimed, and made a step to look again at that strange, pathetic, lonesome, ocean memorial.

"Wambold!" exclaimed Brigstock.

I glanced round, and then at the paper, and said, "Yes,—Wambold's the name."

"It was my brother," said the cook.

"What jer mean, Lucky?" exclaimed Brigstock, whilst the seamen, nearly all hands of them, who had come aft to hoist the boat, drew close to listen, the women along the bulwarks and deck all staring aft in a



long row of white faces and bright eyes and fluttering ribbands and feathers.

“John Wambold was my brother,” said Wambold, in a gloomy voice, and stupid, amazed look.

“And the boatswain who sent that thing adrift is your father?” said I.

“He is,” answered Wambold.

It was the most extraordinary coincidence I ever heard of.

## CHAPTER II.

## AT PRAYERS.

THE boat was hoisted, the topsail-yard swung, way got upon the ship, and presently the rude, floating cross, with its sorrowful inscription, was slowly sliding past abeam, within biscuit toss. Wambold got into the main-rigging, and leaning back against the ratlines, watched his brother's memorial, his head bowed on his folded arms. It needed but his figure thus posed, putting all the passion of rude human grief into that rocking cross, to perfect the picture.

There have been times when the loneliness of the ocean, in the blackness of some hushed night in a middle-watch, has oppressed my spirits so heavily that I have felt it as a sorrow ; but never was the loneliness of the

deep made so vast, sensible, overwhelming a presence of before to my heart as now, by the spectacle of that cross sliding into our wake. The whole sea, laughing and splendid under the sun, was changed into a mighty graveyard by it. Hundreds of miles, perhaps, separated the body from the floating tombstone which the old boatswain had launched, but somehow *that* did not affect the fancy of the dead lad just underneath his father's cross, as he would lie if buried ashore.

Whilst the thing was still in sight, I called Wambold out of the rigging.

"It's a strange meeting, my man."

"Oh, my God, yes, sir! Poor Johnny! I heard father had taken him to sea last year."

He strained his eyes at the object in our wake with a dull, dumb look, like an animal in pain.

"Hain't we to get no breakfast this morning?" cried the sharp voice of a woman on the quarter-deck.

"Poor Johnny!" exclaimed Wambold, still straining his eyes astern. "I allow

father's 'art was pretty nigh broke when he launched that job."

He then went down the poop-ladder to the galley.

After breakfast, when I was in my cabin, I heard, through the open port-hole, the notes, as I thought, of a bird singing most deliciously. I listened with astonishment, and put my face to the window, expecting to catch sight of a vessel close aboard. Then, hearing the whistle again — why, yes, thought I, it's Kate piping up overhead.

I finished what I had been about, and went on deck, and found Kate and Alice Perry seated side by side on the skylight, Kate, at that instant, trilling piercingly, like a canary, the other watching her with glowing eyes, and a wonderful grin of glaring teeth, Mr. Joe Harding sourly trudging the deck abreast of them, giving them a sideways, sneering look as he passed, whilst on the countenance of the man at the wheel, who happened to be the gooseberry-eyed, ginger-haired, dandified chap, Dick Hull,

there sat an expression quite in keeping with Joe's face.

When Kate saw me she brightened with colour. She held a handkerchief and polished the whistle when she took it from her mouth to hand it to Perry, who piped whilst I approached, but very badly; I feared the girl had no ear. I shook hands with Kate, and thanked her for obliging me, then with Perry, and asked how she liked it.

"Oh, it's just beautiful," she answered. "If Miss Darnley'll kindly be patient, yer shan't want for music."

I took the pipe and blew an "All hands" call, then others, smiling at Perry's stare of eager enjoyment and childish wonder. But wishing to look to the ship, I handed the pipe to Kate, who at once trilled till the echoes in the mizzen-royal were like a lark singing in the sky. Not that Miss Darnley did as yet pipe that whistle with the ease of a salted boatswain, but she had picked up such art as she possessed with a wonderfully clever quickness, and I guessed there was no boatswain afloat whom she would not be a

match for in this accomplishment after a single voyage of piping.

I stood at the rail at the break, looking about me, at the crowds of females moving about the decks from abreast of the galley to the cuddy front, at the seamen of the watch for whom Brigstock had found jobs, at the noble show of marble white canvas, swelling in stirless breasts to the golden balls of the trucks. We were fortunate in our weather. The sea was quiet, and light as the breeze was, the run of the line of crystals and prisms of froth over the side was six at the least. They had killed a pig when the women were at breakfast and I below. They had managed the matter cleanly and quietly, and I spied the carcase, with Wambold busy upon it, hanging in the twilight of the forecastle break, just forward of the windlass.

A girl, after staring at me, came up the poop-ladder. She was Susannah Corbin. I bade her good morning.

“Good morning to you, sir,” she exclaimed. “Oi’d loike to ask, capt’n, if us gals of your

company are to start agin at larning how to be sailors ? ”

“Certainly,” said I, “and this very morning.”

“Why’s Miss Perry practising the whistle ? ”

“Because she wants to know how to play.”

“Capt’n, don’t let that there girl be too much all there with you. Oi know what it is. She wants to make out she’s the fittest of us all, the best for the deck and the best for aloft. What Oi say is, don’t give her all the chance. Let me’n the others have a bit. Give me a suit of man’s clothes, and Oi’m game to lay out yon,” said she, pointing to the maintopsail-yardarm, “soon as I’ve got ’em on.”

I told her I did not intend the girls should make any experiments aloft at present, but that I was delighted to hear her talk of the work with so much enthusiasm. I assured her I did not value Alice Perry in the smallest degree above her and the rest of my company, and that she was learning to

play the pipe because she loved the glitter of the silver, and hankered after the thing as a decoration. This made Susannah laugh, and she went down the steps, saying she and the others would be ready whenever I was.

Probably Harding had overheard us, for, as I was stepping aft again to join the two girls, who between them were making a grove of the poop with their concert of the whistle, he approached me with a civil salute of his thumb to his forehead, and said, with a struggling smile—

“I beg pardon, capt’n, but your pardner blows uncommon well, considering.”

“She does,” I answered shortly, but with entire indifference to his neglect of quarter-deck etiquette, seeing that he was but a forecastle hand, without knowledge of the ways of the world aft; it was enough that Brigstock and he were respectful, suggesting, however covertly, by their bearing their sense of the wrong they had done me.

“D’yer reckon upon finding the girls good aloft?”



“Yes.”

“But, God bless my ’art,” said he, rolling up his eyes to the maintopmast-crosstrees, “what are they a-going to do with nothen but soft muscle in their arms, and hands like cheese, in a reefing job, in a sudden hard gale on a black night?”

“When’s that going to happen, Mr. Harding?”

“Well, when it do, sir,” said he, with a look round at the sea, as though it were coming.

“Not on this side of the Horn, for the women, anyhow,” said I. “Afterwards, when you’re all gone ashore, we must pray for fine weather.”

“I ain’t going to say,” said he, speaking with labour, as though full of deep thought, “that it isn’t a good idea, and feasible. Of course, as it’s been put, it mightn’t answer, with us men out of the vessel, to ship a company of beachcombers, and take strange hands out of such ships as ’ud loan ’em to yer, with a heap of gals, some of ’em good looking, still aboard. But I dunno that I’d

like the risk myself—no mate to relieve me, none hable to take a cast of the lead, the whole biling on the back of one man, which, if he falls sick and dies—only think! A cargo of females a-mucking about——”

I interrupted him—

“Lord Nelson said that at sea much must be left to chance. With me, in a sudden black gale, and a ’tweendecks full of women unfit to go aloft, it’s what can’t stand must go. Would it be the first time nothing’s been left but a bolt-rope?” And I walked off singing aloud—

“Come all you young men and maidens, that wishes  
for to sail,  
And I will let you hear of where you must a-roam ;  
We’ll embark into a ship, which her taw’sls is let fall,  
And all unto an ileyand where we never will go  
home.”

I allowed Kate half an hour to give her lesson in, and began to be somewhat hopeful of Perry’s ear when on a sudden she piped “Belay !” in as well-managed a turn as ever I could have given to the brief blast.

At three bells—half-past nine—the lesson

being ended, I asked Kate to pipe my company on to the poop, and away she goes to the break of the deck, followed by Alice Perry—who looked hot and pleased as though fresh from a dance—and pipes the familiar call of “All hands.” I saw Bull just forward of the fore-rigging bobbing his burly bulk in efforts to catch a clear view of her; the others of the crew on deck seemed mightily tickled. Indeed, as she stood erect, with the silver pipe glittering like frost at the pout of her red lips, Kate was as fine a shape of woman as ever trod plank or soil. All the swimming, flowing grace of the rolling billow came into her figure out of the gentle motions of the ship.

When the women heard the pipe, they rushed up on the poop-ladder in a scramble of hands, one pulling at another to pass. I saluted them as they arrived by raising my hat four or five times, and, when they were all massed to windward, I counted, and made them forty-four. This number was fourteen or fifteen more than I needed; so I politely requested those who were not of my

original company to betake themselves to the main-deck again, promising they should be the first to serve as recruits if our number diminished.

One of them was Emma Marks. She glared at me ; her eyes were like small sun-flowers, as I have written. She said she was as good as any of the others, and didn't mean to go. As she was bound to prove as poor as a sailor as she was unsightly as a woman, I begged her not to be impertinent, and cautioned her that her very disobedience disqualified her as a mariner. She then grew insolent, told me she could see through my dirty tricks, that my teaching the girls was all tomfoolery, meant to mask an intention to improve Alice Perry's education and manners, with a view to my choosing her as a pardner and settling down on Brigstock's island, and she ended in putting out her tongue at me.

I said, with a smile, " What character are you taking out with you ? "

Before she could answer, however, Perry was upon her, and a scratching and scream-

ing farce, as it might be called, was scarcely averted by a number of the rejected females throwing themselves upon Emma, and tumbling her and themselves down on to the quarter-deck.

Our lesson that morning lasted two hours. I went the rounds of the ship with the girls, carried them on to the forecastle, and taught them to distinguish between the jibs and topmast staysail. I showed them the jib-sheets and the jib-halliards; we let go, hauled down, hoisted afresh, to a song which I started, the girls tailing on and singing out like a peal of bells; indeed, they enjoyed the singing part of their discipline most of all, I think, for they sang often when there was no need, and out of time; but it was wonderful how well they managed, and what intelligence they showed.

I dismissed them at half-past eleven, telling them I must fetch my sextant to get an observation. Some begged me to teach them how to shoot the sun; but I laughed and said I had no time for that.

In the afternoon, between three and five,

I gave seven of them—seven alone were qualified for that work—a lesson in the art of steering. It was very fine weather, the wind steady, the sea smooth, the breeze abeam, and the ship easy to control. Susannah Corbin promised to make the best hand amongst them at this work. She grasped the wheel as though to the manner born, and the wake went away astern of her straight as a ruled line, while she glanced with her arch 'longshore eyes from compass to canvas and back again.

Next day was Sunday. The weather was still very fair, the sea flowing in lines of summer softness, the sky clad in places in links of pearly vapour, rose-edged, compacted like chain armour; gentle as the wind had been, we had made good southing, and I was well satisfied.

At breakfast, Brigstock came out of his cabin. He only used it to sleep in; it had been the second mate's—Jeremy Latto's—and that man's clothes and effects were still in it. Brigstock's time, when he was not turned in, was either spent in keeping a

look-out, or in talking to the crew and their pardners about his Constitution.

He said to me this morning, whilst we breakfasted—

“Capt’n, there’s been no sarvice held aboard since Dr. Rolt’s time.”

“What’s to prevent prayers from being read if the people wish?” said I.

“Suppose we have church this morning, then?” said he.

I promptly assented, very well satisfied that his, and, as I took it, the crew’s taste should lie in such a direction.

“Will you read the sarvice, sir?” said he.

I saw desire strong in his face, and answered—

“I believe, Mr. Brigstock, you are better qualified than I.”

He looked as pleased as his long, serious, funeral countenance permitted, and made me a bow. I told him, since he was to read the service, I’d leave the ordering of it and the calling of the people together to him, and putting a cigar in my mouth, went to Kate, whom I had caught sight of on the quarter-

deck, and carried her on to the poop for a walk.

Whilst we strolled, the crew rigged up church on the quarter-deck by bringing benches out of the 'tweendecks, chairs from the cabin, and whatever else there was to sit upon ; they covered the capstan with a red ensign, upon which they placed Brigstock's Bible, along with a volume of Common Prayer which they had borrowed from one of the women. Their pardners helped them in a spirited way, as though this ceremony was part of the island scheme ; but most of the females gazed sulkily and at a distance in groups, and I told Kate their looks did not promise Brigstock's good work much encouragement.

By-and-by Alice Perry and another woman came on to the poop. The other woman wore her bonnet somewhat rakishly perched ; and her gown had the swelled look of a falling parachute. Her face was flat ; her eyes pale blue and globular, and drooped at you with a sidelong fall of her head when she looked. Perry was in a piratical humour. There



was lightning in her eye, and she came along with a stormy swing of figure.

"Ain't *you* going to preach, capt'n," said she.

"No," I answered.

"Who is then?" inquired the other woman.

"Brigstock."

"Cursed if I'm a-going to pray with him, then!" cried Alice Perry, looking around to see if he was within hearing.

"Nor me along with Miss Cobbs, so there!" exclaimed the other woman.

"You needn't attend; let's have no disturbance," said I, peremptorily.

"I've a good mind," cried the other woman, "to throw some of them benches into the sea. What right have they to take them out of our quarters? They belongs to us."

"I'll snivel that Brigstock into proper praying afore I've done with him," exclaimed Perry. "Only think of such a beast stopping us from getting to Australia, and keeping us in hourly fear of drowning!"

"Behave yourselves properly," said Kate,

warmly. "Don't allow such women as Kate Davis and Sarah Harvey to set you an example of decent conduct."

Alice stared at her mutinously, with her hands upon her hips. I advised them to mind their eye lest the men should fall foul of them, in which case I'd be helpless. I was not going to permit them, I said, to act so as to imperil the safety of the rest of the females, and after rating them into what resembled an air of sulky submission, I despatched them off the poop.

At half-past ten a man started to ring the ship's bell; the crew came aft dressed up in their best togs; their pardners also emerged from the main-hatch arrayed in Sunday finery, in bonnets and hats, feathers and flowers, and ribbons and colours. Their appearance instantly painted a vision of the area-gate, the Sunday evening out, and the young man waiting at the street corner.

Brigstock was skewered to the neck in his borrowed buttoned-up coat, and was evidently trying to look his conception of a man who combined in himself the functions

of the Patriarch, the President, and the Priest. His air was reverent, his walk slow ; he came to the capstan and stood erect with his hand upon the Bible, gazing gravely around him. I was struck by his posture and appearance, and watched him with interest, thinking that, though mean in degree as he was, yet, after all, opinion and action, in such men, actually mean civilization in the making.

Miss Cobbs took a chair close beside the capstan. The line of her mouth was out of sight from the poop, but I could distinguish and enjoy an expression of prim self-complacency. She wore a peculiar bonnet—very large ; it yawned round her face, shooting upwards, shovel-shaped, and was like a little piece of market-garden, with its sham vegetable trimmings. I recollect no more of her attire than that bonnet.

Kate went on to the quarter-deck and seated herself. The seamen sat on either hand of Brigstock, each man with his pardner at his side. Observing that the full complement was wanting, I sung out to pass the word for Miss Susannah Corbin ;

she came out from a crowd in the waist, where there was much noisy talk and flourishing of hands, with Alice Perry and the woman in the rakishly perched bonnet in the thick of the girls. Susannah stepped on to the poop. I asked if she would steer the ship whilst Brigstock read the service.

"Whoy yes," she answered, with her face lighting up; "you couldn't ask me to do anything Oi'd loike better," and she ran aft laughing, and in great spirits.

The fellow at the wheel was Prentice. I said to him, "Go and sit with your pardner whilst Brigstock reads prayers. This young lady will stand your trick."

The dark, high-coloured, fisherman-looking seaman stared at her for a moment with a grin, next at me, doubting I was in earnest, then just saying, "Ay, ay, sir," he gave the wheel to Susannah, and went forward, rolling in his gait, and looking astern as if he believed he'd be called back before he was halfway.

I saw that the course was right, and told Susannah to mind it, watching her a minute

or two; by which time the bell had ceased to ring, and I heard the sound of Brigstock's melancholy voice. But scarce had he opened with his nasal drawl, deep-toned with lung power got by bawling to mastheads, and answering from remote parts of ships, when a number of women began to sing a hymn. I went to the rail to see what was going to happen. The mass of the females who had declined to pray with Cobbs and Brigstock had divided themselves into three mobs, one on either side the galley, and one on the forecastle; and no sooner had one started a hymn than the party on the starboard side of the deck swelled their throats in another hymn, whilst the fore-castle mob shrieked a further discord into the clamour by raising their voices in a third quite different hymn.

Now this was the strangest thing to listen to you can imagine! and it was a memorable and impressive picture to behold also. The ship was full of sunshine, colour, and life, and so was the air with the noise of the several hymns through which Brigstock's

deep melancholy voice threaded its way as patiently and doggedly as an ocean current a turbulent sea. I considered it vile behaviour in the women thus to disturb the worshippers, and dangerous also; but there was no help for it. I could but look on bareheaded—keeping the poop that I might watch the ship.

The Brigstock party listened very tranquilly, every eye fixed upon the reader, who pored upon his book through magnifying spectacles; often moving his hands with gestures of agitation, which contrasted strangely with the level funeral flow of his voice. There were four women, not counting Kate, in addition to the pardners, and I own I was struck and even affected as I looked down upon that scene of worship from the height of the poop-deck. Instead of ropes and spars, and the glitter and music of the sea outside, and the noise and spectacle of the screeching females forward, you needed but a wood, or a little open space in a forest as a theatre for that group to help you to figure some quaint, primitive scene of early settle-

ment, when such another figure as Brigstock, an Elder or Father, with lifted hands, and deep voice trembling with fervour, invoked God's blessing upon the soil the family knelt on, upon the hopes and resolutions which had brought them to it, upon the little band whose seed hereafter was to be as the sands of the shore.

I was glad when the women silenced their noise, perhaps ashamed of themselves, or curious to watch the worshippers, or knowing no more hymns. I hated Brigstock, but all the same I said "Amen," along with the rest of them, at the end of his prayers.

They spent an hour thus, many of the women creeping in twos and threes aft, nearer and nearer to hearken, then sitting down and joining in the worship. It ended in Brigstock looking round and saying—

"Capt'n, my lads, and ladies, you that are of us, and you that are simply a-listening; here's the first of some verses I learnt when I was a boy, which I can't tell yer the music of. I've altered some words to suit this occasion. If yer please, we'll sing it to

the hair of ‘So fare you well, my pretty young gell!’” And in his deep voice he recited the following lines, delivering them as solemnly as he had read prayers—

“ Oh, we are the partners what sails the deep,  
*Hurrah, my boys ! Hurrah, my girls !*  
The Lord’s heye’s on us awake or asleep,  
*Hurrah, my boys ! Good-bye, fare-yeer-well !*  
We’ll sing to His glory as on we sails,  
*Hurrah, my boys ! Hurrah, my girls !*  
For he’s our Capt’n in calms and in gales,  
*Hurrah, my boys, we’re homeward bound ! ”*

The sailors sang these words to the famous windlass shanty, with deep enjoyment of the melody, and not their partners only, but many other women swelled the chorus.

Throughout, stout-hearted Susannah Corbin held the ship steady to her course.



## CHAPTER III.

## MY GIRL-CREW.

THIS same Sunday night it came on to blow in the middle watch; it was the first of a spell of as heavy weather as ever I can remember. We snugged down to a close-reefed maintopsail and storm trysail, and under these and the foretopmast-staysail, the ship with her fore and after yards braced aback, her rigging blowing out, her decks full of water, pitched and rolled, surging in thunderous heaves to windward to the under-rush of the boiling steep, then sloping to leeward till it was all roaring froth to the shear-poles. Sometimes we got a slant, and braced away for a run, but again and yet again we had to heave her to.

A gale at sea is abominable at any time,

but unspeakably so when you are on board a ship full of women. It was impossible to keep the girls battened down. Yet the hatches had to be on, if the ship was not to fill and founder.

Taking advantage of a lull after the women had been imprisoned for many hours, I went below to see how things fared there. The atmosphere was poisonous. It was wonderful the lantern did not burn blue. A dark, dismal, miserable scene; figures stretched helplessly about on the decks or on the shelves; benches, mess-utensils, and the like, rushing and plunging from side to side over the planks with the swift and frenzied heaving of the ship; creakings and strainings furious as the noises of a battle-field, terrific to the imprisoned ears with the volcanic shock of the smiting surge bursting against the side, or falling in tons overhead.

There was but one remedy. The women were not to be stifled—especially Kate. So I brought the whole blessed lot of them, eighty-nine in all, now that Mary Lonney had cut her throat, not counting Miss Cobbs

—I brought the whole of them, I say, into the cuddy, and there they lived for some days of tempest, sleeping upon their own bedding on the cabin deck, and eating at the table of such food as could be served without fire; for the galley had been thrice washed out, and Wambold nearly killed by a sea that dashed him against the bulwarks and left him stranded and unconscious under the long-boat.

Many of the women were shockingly seasick: Miss Cobbs horribly so. I see *her* now sitting at the table, leaning her thin chin in her hands, speechless with nausea, her sausage decorations out of curl, and Brigstock opposite, fresh from the deck, in a streaming coat, and white-eyed with dried brine, extending a pannikin of rum, and begging her, in his deep, serious voice, to drain it down, as it was more settling than brandy. I made Kate take my cabin, and she shared it with five of the most delicate amongst the girls, three being governesses, and, like Kate, gentlewomen.

After several days of this sort of thing, all

wool-white cliffs below straining and curling with the gale, all wet, flying shadow on high, with never more than a sulphur-coloured break where it wasn't raining for one minute, the wind flew into the north, the weather cleared, and a few hours later the ship was going before it, with dark mast-headed topsails, and lifting forecourse, and maintop-gallant-sail still wrinkled with the long grip of the gaskets, the sun sparkling in the north-west, a huge, foam-freckled swell of the sea in chase, and a large albatross hanging over the wide race of wake; the decks already dry, the watch below spreading their wet togs on the forecastle, the main-hatch open, and a dozen women about the decks, holding on and watching the majestic blue folds sweeping past the ship.

Well, that albatross might have told them the Southern Cross was now a nightly show, and that we could think of the Horn as a thing no longer remote.

When I went on deck to get an observation of the sun on this day, Joe Harding, whose face looked more than commonly sour in its

setting of narrow-thatched sou'-wester, said to me, whilst I stood beside him to look at the ship as she went rolling over the prodigious heave left by the gale—

“Them sailors o’ yourn, sir, han’t been of much use since it came on to blow.”

“As useful as the rest of you. Nothing wanted doing.”

“They’d ha’ made a tidy show aloft a-reefing!” said he, with an acid look at the topsail yard.

“There’s to be no reefing for them this side of the Horn, I told you.”

“They’ll go up for good, I allow,” said he, “afore they goes up at all.”

“You be hung!” I thought to myself, turning from him; but he had put a thought into my head, and next day I carried it out.

It was fine enough to enable me to do so. All weight had gone out of the run of the sea in the night, and at eight in the morning the ship was thrusting through it at about seven, the port foretopmast studdingsail set, the wind cold and bright, something to the

south of east, with three sails close together on the horizon glittering icily under the sun, and the ship forward like a laundry drying-ground.

Once again in my cabin, I had overhauled the ship's papers, and having clearly ascertained what I wanted to know, I said to Brigstock after breakfast, when I went on deck—

“Where's the lading of clothing stowed in this ship, do you know?”

“They're a light cargo and 'll be on top, anyhow. Yer dorn't dig to a vessel's dunnage for jackets and vests.”

“Forward or aft?”

“Aft, I should think, sir.”

“Well, then, Mr. Brigstock, whether forward or aft, a bale or two of men's clothes must be come at; so send a couple of hands into the hold—down aft to start with.”

He hailed the fore part of the ship, and gave the necessary instructions in his deep, preaching voice, leaning over the rail to speak to the men.

Whilst I paced the poop, Kate came aft

with Perry to give her a lesson on the pipe, and presently the wind was merry with the silver whistling; than which there is no gayer sound, and no better music in the wide world unto which to wed the poem of a ship, whether it blows hard, and the boatswain is hoarsely bawling, or whether it is a gentle and a spring-like scene of ocean, as this morning was, with the sunshine raining upon the breasts of canvas till, looking off the leeches of the sails, you see the overflow of light trembling into the blue air in a silver sheen, lovely and wonderful, a miracle of delicate reflection.

I stopped the piping to talk to Kate, and to promise Alice Perry that our sailor classes would start afresh soon. Whilst I was speaking earnestly and apart with Kate, Brigstock came to tell me that the men had found the clothing in the after-hold, and had got several bales up. Where were they to be put? "In the cuddy," said I, and after a little, left Kate and the other to go on with their piping, and went below.

The men had brought up four large bales

of wearing apparel. These, I believe, were consignments from the Colonization Society : I am not sure. They were stitched like wool bales. I sliced through a short length of stitching, and found the contents female apparel. But the next was men's, and I noted the marks : a diamond for men's, and a cross, with a letter over it, for women's.

Gouger entered the cabin just then, and I told him to shut the door and help me. In fact, the curiosity of the women was so great that, on catching sight of me in the cuddy, stooping over three or four big bales, forty or fifty were already crowding about the front, making deadlights for the windows with their heads, and elbowing one another through the door.

I made Gouger hold up the articles of clothing as I pulled them out of the bales. In a short time, this end of the interior looked like a cheap outfitter's shop, with trousers, caps, waistcoats, and such things. The coats were mostly of shiny blue cloth, with velvet collars ; I pulled many velvet waistcoats out



of the bale. The breeches, as they hung from Gouger's lifted arms, showed of a flowing bell-shape. There was a great number of caps, both in cloth and fur.

I made the clothes into parcels—every parcel a suit—and told Gouger to fetch Miss Cobbs. She promptly arrived, with some of the greenish tinge of her recent severe spell of sickness still lingering in her thin face; but her smirk was firm and defined, the lift and fall of her eyes demurely coquettish.

She curtsied, and gazed with surprise at the clothes which lay in little heaps along the deck.

"I intend," said I, "to equip my ship's company of women with a suit apiece."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, Miss Cobbs. Their petticoats are in the way of their work. Will you overlook the girls whilst they try the things on? They can use these cabins. Everything must be done with the strictest regard to propriety."

"Well, sir, I can only say it's a pleasure to sail along with such a gentleman as you,"

she exclaimed, sinking her lean figure in another curtsy. "So different from most ship captains, I'm sure. Some very 'orrid stories are told of female emigrant ships."

"Nothing horrid shall be told of the *Earl of Leicester*, Miss Cobbs. Your partner Brigstock is a very remarkable person. Only, when you become his wife, make him wary in forming his judgment of men."

She curtsied again, as though to thank me. I asked her to stay where she was, and receive the women, and passed on to the quarter-deck, where a large number of the girls were assembled. Catching Kate's eye as she stood near the hatch, I beckoned her to me, and asked her to whistle "All hands." She did so, and in a minute the girls of my company were hurrying up the ladder on to the poop, with others, who had caught the note of the summons down in the 'tweendecks, running up the main-hatch steps. I was amused by the interest they took in the work, and by their alertness and zeal, and whilst I stood with Kate, watching them flouncing up the ladder, I said—

“What would they think at Blathford of your whistling all those girls into that scramble, as though you were some goddess with a magic pipe, which you needed but to breathe into to set everybody leaping?”

“I find,” said she, “that this pipe makes me a boatswain. I thought I was to be a mate.”

“Whose mate?” said I, looking at her.

“Why yours, of course,” she answered ingenuously; and the significance of the answer then occurring to her, she coloured a fine red, and went with confusion up the ladder after the other women, I following.

The girls stood to windward, thinking I had called them to drill. I pulled off my cap and gave them a bow. I observed that this punctual salute pleased them, and said—

“Ladies, there’s in this ship a quantity of men’s wearing apparel. It will be impossible for you to work in the clothes you have on. I have a settled intention, if you will enable me to carry it out, of navigating this ship to Sydney with your help alone. I’ll ship no risk of destruction, of murder, of crime, in

the shape of a crew of men. The Pacific beachcombers are mostly ruffians and scoundrels, escaped convicts, savages of a bloodier character than the natives who'd eat them. Nor will I make for the Sandwich Islands for a Kanaka crew. When we are in sunny, quiet seas t'other side the Horn, you and I, ladies, will work the ship, and carry her safely into Sydney Bay. Have you a doubt of it?"

"It's got to be done," cried Alice Perry, quick as lightning. "We don't want no more men on board."

"No bad uns, anyway," said Miss Emmy Read.

"A pretty lot there's on board now!" exclaimed a woman, "and yet I dare say, what with their snivellin' psalm-singing, and their keeping to theirselves, they'd be considered respectable men *for* sailors."

Brigstock, who was on the other side of the deck listening, on hearing this, delivered four or five deep-toned notes of laughter, like the opening, hiccoughing music of a donkey's bray.

“Where’s the clothes?” cried Perry, coming towards me.

“Ladies, let me have my say. It will be necessary that those who work this ship should be dressed in men’s clothes, after Mr. Brigstock and his people have left us. I propose that this morning you try the suits on, and show yourselves in them. It will be what actors would call a dress rehearsal. Every day you’ll clothe yourselves for drill, so that you’ll speedily grow used to the novelty of the garments, and lose the embarrassment which, of course, I expect at the start you will most, indeed all of you, feel.”

“Not me, I swear!” said Alice Perry.

“Nor me,” cried Fanny Pike, whom I should have considered the likeliest of any of them to hang back and make a difficulty of the thing.

“Nor me—nor me!” was shouted by several other voices.

Some, however, coloured and looked shyly, and made remarks one to another in low tones. There was a great deal of giggling and head-shaking, and “Oh, I can’t!” and

“What a sight I’ll be!” and “What’ll the sailors say!” and other exclamations of the kind. Catching up one of these sentences, I said—

“Don’t trouble your heads about what the men may think. They’ll stare a bit and grin, I dare say. Will you mind that?”

A woman snapped her fingers, and Perry tossed her head with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders.

“But the crew,” I went on, “will as quickly get used to the sight of you as you to one another, and find no more to look at in a girl with a man’s coat on than in that mast there. Miss Cobbs is waiting for you in the cuddy. Those willing to make the experiment will please descend by the companion-way yonder.”

A rush followed. There were thirty girls in all, not counting Kate. About twenty fled to the companion-hatch and disappeared as fast as they could move. The remainder stood talking, giggling, staring at one another, every one urging the rest.

“I’d go if I had your figure, Miss Halsted.”

"I can't abear the thought of making a sight of myself."

"Just try it once, Miss Hale; you'll make the prettiest young man you can't think."

"Well, if Margaret Evans has the courage to, I ought," said a girl, and away she went.

Others presently followed her. Three then remained, and after I had talked with them a bit, and pointed out that the larger the number the smaller the embarrassment, that there were hundreds of instances of women passing as men, that our case was peculiar, and that the apparel now to be tried on need not be worn until after the crew had gone;—after, I say, I had talked to them in this way the three consented, and went with blushes and titters to the companion-hatch.

The women were a long time below. The skylight was closed, and I heard no noise, but I guessed there would be plenty—shrieks of excitement, calls of mortification or delight. Thirty girls trying on clothes! wouldn't the cabin they used be clamorous? They

had looking-glasses, too, in the cuddy, long slips of mirror which showed the figure; small wonder they were in no hurry.

A heap of women watched at the cuddy-front, but the door was closed, and as the girls used the berths to dress in, there was little of the fun to be seen from the quarter-deck.

Kate went below by the companion-way to take a look round and report if any of the women were at a loss to fit themselves; if so, Miss Cobbs was to open the other bale—making the third—one of female clothes only having been brought up. Whilst I was looking over the poop-break a woman called up to me to ask if nobody but the girls I taught were to be dressed as men.

“That’s all,” I answered.

“As I told you, Miss Stokes,” exclaimed a woman.

“It won’t be fair, then,” yelped the other, snappishly.

I pretended to be suddenly engrossed by some object on the horizon over the weather-bow.



"I wonder what Mr. Brigstock thinks of the capt'n a-dressing up his own party and taking no more notice of the rest of us than's if we was dirt and slime under his feet?" snarled Emma Marks, backing with the motions of a recoiling cat to catch a view of Brigstock, who was standing to leeward.

He turned a wooden face upon the little Jewess, and without heeding her slowly walked towards the wheel.

"Nice samples as servants, some of you!" thought I, "to send out at the public cost and be kept on arrival, at the expense of the Colony, till you're furnished with situations you're as unfit for as you'd *be* fit, durn ye! to marry costermongers, and embark on a back alley life of drink and broken heads!" But let me be just; they were not all Emma Markses. Even in that envious crowd down upon the quarter-deck, I had noticed countenances almost of refinement, with one fair girl on the skirts of the mob looking up at me with a face—

"Like the Milky Way i' the sky,  
A meeting of gentle lights without a name."

On a sudden I heard a great noise of laughter in the companion, and five women dressed as men rushed out and began to cut a hundred ridiculous capers, dancing, toe-and-heeling as in the hornpipe, hopping, rolling in imitation of a drunken sailor, laughing as if they would split their sides all the while, with Brigstock beside the wheel, and Snortledge at it, shaking and rumbling in convulsions of uncontrolled merriment. I had never imagined Brigstock could have been so moved.

But, indeed, the antics of the girls thus dressed were very ridiculous. I had to look hard before I recognized the little fools. Their clothes shrunk them to half their former size; they seemed mere striplings of lads, spite of their swelling shapes.

The first who had dashed up was Alice Perry. She wore a fur cap, a buttoned-up round jacket with a velvet collar, and her feet, which were not particularly small, were almost lost in the bell-shaped foot of her trousers. She had piled her hair up so as to get most of it under her cap, but plenty—

black, tossed, wild upon her brow—remained, and she looked the most defiant, saucy, handsome figure of a young sailor the fancy could picture.

The others were similarly attired, saving that three wore cloth caps, and had been at no pains to conceal their hair. They larked about, squealing, romping, dancing, never heeding me more than Brigstock or Snortledge. At last Alice Perry, arresting herself in a certain extravagant hornpipe shuffle and twirl with grace inimitable, because natural and unconscious, cried with her eyes on fire, and her face red with merriment and exertion—

“Ain’t I to be your bo’sun, capt’un, now I’m a man? Tell Miss Darnley to give me the whistle. She can keep all on teaching me, if she will, till I am perfick! And do ’e say,” she cried, flashing her face upon Brigstock and pointing at him, “that I’m afraid of the masts!”

She sprang, and with astonishing agility was in the mizzen rigging before I could sing out. Up she trotted in defiance of my roars

to her to come down, with an occasional miss of her foot, so that one or the other leg would shoot through the ratlines ; but, with a spirit I relished for its English daring, spite of her disobedience and my fear that she'd go overboard, she gained the futtock shrouds, squeezed through the lubber's hole, and standing erect in the top, pulled her fur cap off, and waved it frantically, shrieking, " Hurrah ! Hurrah ! "

Nearly all the crew stood forward, staring aft with grins, and that look of stupid delight and wonder which is characteristic of a profession that sees little more than salt water, and is therefore easily pleased.

Whilst Perry was hurrahing up in the mizzen-top, half a score of girls, breeked and jacketed, dashed up the companion-way, laughing at the top of their pipes. One of them was Susannah Corbin, who, the instant she caught sight of Perry aloft, made for the mizzen rigging, and slapped her way up to the ratlines with the nimbleness of an old hand. Nay, she took the futtock shrouds, and went over the edge of the top, and

worked her way up as high as the topmast cross-trees, where she stood looking down into the top while she called out, "Whoy don't you come up here, Miss Perry? There's out'n away more to be seen."

"Come down! Come down!" I shouted.

The rest of the women were by this time on deck. The poop looked as though a boys' school had in some magical manner come over the side. Kate alone of the women aft wore the clothes of her sex; no, I must also except Miss Cobbs, who had stationed herself alongside of Brigstock near the wheel, and was staring up at the girls aloft with her thin lips parted in a little yawn of horror. Screeches of laughter were perpetually coming from the emigrants, who watched the scene from the bulwarks or the poop-ladder.

Indeed, the transformation was more extraordinary than language can convey. All these girls wore their hair as before, and still they looked as much boys and young men as though they were so. The oddness lay in the manner the clothes shrunk them. Some who would pass as fairly fine girls of the

average stature in their gowns were so small in their male attire, you would have thought them as easy to lift and run away with as little children.

They made a wild confusion with their laughter, shrill remarks, rollicking airs and graces for the diversion of the main-deck spectators.

My repeated bawling to Perry and Corbin to come down caused the general attention to be directed aloft, and, greatly to my dismay and annoyance, four girls—of whom I remember two were Ellen Clark (who wore spectacles) and Mary Barker (a small, pretty, active girl, with beautiful chestnut hair and soft, dark eyes, though with a broken nose that put the ugliest profile in the ship upon her)—four girls, I say, sprang to the rigging. I jumped, seized one, and pulled her off the rail, shouting to the others not to attempt it—that there was plenty of time—that I meant to give them lessons by-and-by ; but the three little fools persevered, and, laughing and squeaking and gripping the shrouds as though to squeeze all the tar out, they crawled

about two-thirds high, and then came down silently and very slowly indeed, feeling for the ratlines with extraordinarily wary feet, watched almost breathlessly by me, who expected every moment to see one or another tumble back overboard, and deaf to the impassioned invitations of Corbin up in the cross-trees, and the taunts and sneers of Perry in the top.

Those two came down in a few minutes, Corbin as though she had been used to running up and down rigging all her life, Perry leisurely and carefully; for to the beginner it is always easier going up than coming down a rope ladder. Corbin, when she gained the deck, looked at me with a hot, exulting face, filled with a demand for applause. Perry stuck her tongue into her cheek at Brigstock, and then shrieked—

“Why didn’t the others finish goin’ up, like me and Susannah, to let the sailors see how ’ousemaids and cooks can do without ’em?”

It was not for me to reprove those bold young spirits. I had never for a moment

doubted that a trained band of women—numbers adjusting the difference of strength between the sexes—could work a ship *on deck* just as well as any company of seamen; but I had now evidence that active-spirited girls, with an eye fearless of height, could be made useful, fine-weather sailors of for going aloft. More than this I had not expected. In truth, I had never dared hope for so much. To carry the ship to Sydney, working her from the deck, with big trust in the summer seas of the Pacific, leaving the weather to have its will with such canvas as it might compel me to clew up and haul down, was the extent of my dream. Better any measure, no matter how impracticable or foolhardy at first sight than the diabolical risk of shipping a new strange crew on board a vessel full of women with a single officer in command!

When they were on deck, after Perry had shrieked out, I called to the girls to put themselves together in a body to windward and hold their tongues, as I wished to inspect them and ask a question or two. By this



time something of the first blush of novelty was gone. The girls had exhausted mutual criticism, and were perhaps tired of laughing and posture-making. I bade Kate blow the familiar music of "All hands!" mainly to theatricalize the proceedings into the best possible keeping with that sort of vulgar taste which I reckoned upon our company possessing. She blew as directed, and then I bawled again—

"Fall in now, my lads! Shake yourselves together there to wind'ard!" At which there was a general laugh; but they all obeyed, and made the strangest picture of that poop you can imagine, with their mass of thirty male-clad figures, their eyes black, blue, bright, and otherwise, glancing mockingly, coyly, with all sorts of expressions under their roughened curls or smooth bands.

I was at no small trouble to keep my face steady under the converging stare, bright as light in some parts, of those thirty pairs of eyes. The girls ranged themselves shoulder to shoulder in a double rank, very easily,

and with feminine grace yielding to the heave of the deck. Some few were shy, and wore a little colour on their cheeks, and looked awkwardly whilst I ran my gaze over the lot of them, but, on the whole, there was nothing of the embarrassment I had expected. On the contrary, I noticed much enjoyment of the thing as something fresh and new, a break in the melancholy monotony of shipboard life. Then, again, their vanity was tickled. Doubtless there were but few who did not consider they looked charming, and it was delightful to be envied by the women on the main-deck; also the sailors' grinning countenances and fixed observation suggested enough of flattering appreciation to fill up the poor things' measure of satisfaction.

I made them a short speech; I thanked them for this fresh instance of their willingness to oblige me, and assured them that never yet had a captain reason to be prouder of his ship's company than I. I told them that if they, one and all, but knew what a delicious crew of sailors they made in those

clothes, they would be in no hurry to take them off.

This tickled them finely.

I then inquired if the clothes fitted them comfortably. They all said yes. Two or three complained that their coats were rather large, and the sleeves long, holding up their arms in proof.

"There are scissors and needles and thread amongst you," said I. "You'll be able to make your clothes fit. Every one will keep her own suit when she removes it. Mark them for yourselves, that there may be no confusion and misfits."

"They hain't yours to give away in that cool fashion," cried the voice of one of the listeners who crowded the poop-ladder.

That they might understand how very much more comfortably they'd be able to pull and haul in male attire than in gowns and petticoats, I made them let go the mizzen royal, topgallant, and topsail halliards, and hoist the yards afresh. It was truly an extraordinary sight to see them pulling. Perry got on to the rail to sing out, the rest

tailed on, and then to the song of "Cheerly, men!" which they had picked up from the sailors, they mastheaded the yards, one after the other, in strokes as rhythmically pat to the time of their clear girlish chant as the lift and fall of the oars of a man-of-warsman's boat.

Brigstock looked on with a wooden face of astonishment. Some of the sailors cheered the girls when they belayed the topsail halliards—a note of involuntary approval that proved contagious, and twenty or thirty of the bulwark and poop-ladder spectators screamed a round of hurrahs. Miss Cobbs alone seemed to dislike the sight. She stood beside Brigstock with her arms folded, her lips sourly curled to the shape of a finger-nail paring, her glances darting and forbidding, and her thin nostrils wide with objection.

I thanked the girls once more, and requested them to be so good as to go below and change their clothes.

"Mayn't those willing to wear 'em keep 'em on?" asked Alice Perry.

"No, if you please," I answered blandly. "Each will make the suit she wears into a bundle, and to-morrow, weather permitting, you will bring them into the cuddy, where you'll change, as to-day, and we'll have two hours of drill."

This satisfied them, and quieted the few whose faces had threatened a difficulty.

They ran below, again making a great noise with laughter, jokes, and whistling, followed by Miss Cobbs.

"Well," said I to Kate, who was looking through the glass of the skylight and laughing to herself, "what do you think?"

"That you'll make your extraordinary scheme answer," she replied.

"I have sworn it," I exclaimed. "Once those fellows are out of the ship, no man must step aboard till we've entered the Heads."

"But *will* they go out of the ship?"

At that moment Brigstock solemnly stalked up to us.

"Capt'n Morgan," said he, with a sort of slow brooding stare, "if yer willing to re-

consider yer decision and settle along with us yer shall have my place."

"Thanks," said I, smiling, "but I rather want to get home."

"Yer an abler man than me," he continued, preserving his queer gaze, and speaking in a voice charged with admiration, but of a dead kind, without animation to give a turn to his accents, "and the right sort of party, sir, to take the head of a young constitootion. How yer manage to make them gals do what yer tell 'em beats all my going a-fishing. Only Miss Cobbs is of opinion that the dress you mean to put them into hain't exactly calculated to keep up that helement of propriety which you're been all along for maintaining."

"I differ from Miss Cobbs," said I, "but respect her opinion nevertheless. My scheme is as clear cut as yours, Mr. Brigstock. It wants working up as yours did, and Miss Cobbs does not of course forget the oath that you and the crew have taken."

He inclined his head gravely and left us.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE HORN.

AFTER this incident of the women dressing as men, the shipboard routine went along very quietly and orderly, without stop or break worth recurring to, till we entered the cold and stormy parallels of the Horn. Day after day the women habited themselves for the deck-work; they viewed it as a diversion, and made fun of it, yet did so well, were so willing, nimble, and obedient—for I was never weary of making them understand that the safety of the ship rested with them, and that if I shipped fresh hands, no matter whether from the land or the sea, I stood to have my throat cut, whilst the ship would be walked off with, her cargo stolen, and the women barbarously ill-used;—I say they

were so willing and learnt so readily, that before drill was stopped by the bitter howling weather of the far south they were fully equal to handling the ship, to the extent even of five of them, namely, Alice Perry, Susannah Corbin, Ellen Clark, Mary Barker, and a girl named Mabel Marshall, being able to furl in very light weather the mizzen royal (Perry and Corbin) and topgallant-sail (all five), whilst besides these there were four others, namely, Elizabeth Halsted, Alice Fitton, Emmy Read, and Charlotte Brown, equal to the task of "laying out" on the cross-jack yard, and assisting the other lot to stow the sail.

This was very well, but it will not be thought wonderful by those who are acquainted with the marine records, nor by any with knowledge of the class out of which I shaped my supplemental crew.

Brigstock and the men gave me no trouble whatever. They went about their work soberly and decorously, kept to their end of the ship, never laid hands upon anything to eat and drink which they had not a right



to, never once gave any of the women occasion to complain of their conduct. And still, though their bearing showed the influence of Brigstock strong upon them, I never could persuade myself they would stick to their resolution when it came to the point. When they saw the island that was to suit them!—a smiling land if you will, a paradise of an island, beautiful and romantic as that spot which the passions and wickedness of man had in those times made the blackest hell of on the face of the world: but without a house, not an inch of manufactured roof for momentary shelter, nothing stirring but the flashing breaker, or the boughs of trees bending with the soft wind, or birds of lustrous plumage darting like beams of light from one green shadow to another!

I never spoke to any of them, saving Brigstock, and once or twice Bull, about their scheme. All that the former had to say about it convinced me of his patient resolution and rugged rough enthusiasm. Often when we sat together at table he'd enlarge upon his project and tax my gravity

with his voice. He told me there were very few ideas he meant to borrow from civilization ; he couldn't see his way much further than houses and ships like to what the Europeans build ; he rather leaned towards a post-office as a convenient institution when in the course of time numbers should render it necessary. His ceaseless regret was that he was not twenty years younger.

“That there Christian,” he'd say, “never had a chance of seeing what sort of a job Pitcairn was agoin' to prove. I allow that a man wants about forty year to carry out his notions, to nurse 'em, to trim here and correct there, and so lay, what I calls, concrete foundations. Look at New Zealand—look at Tasmania ; take them places forty year ago, and see what's happened to 'em since. I dorn't want no money in our colony. Let all savin's be in produce. Money lowers men's morals. I know men who'd pick the last flower off their mothers' graves if they could sell it. Another notion o' mine is this : I'm for teachin' my people to possess by enjoyin' ! What I says is, the man that enjoys

the hobject he views possesses it as much as the man that owns it. Take pictures, landscapes, dress, jools—yer'll find it true." And so he'd talk, assuring me that amongst his other ambitions was a wish to create a new and original kind of civilization, with a little leaning towards old-world institutions, such as a post-office.

I was long suspicious of Bull, however, and often uneasy with thoughts of how he might conceive a sudden aversion to Brigstock's project, and by talking as a man acquainted with the South Seas, bring others in the forecastle into his way of thinking. I was resolved, however, not to keep him should he change his mind. No, I would not risk the having even one man on board.

But not to dwell on this, one night when we were off the Falklands, an icy, breathless night, and the ship rolling on a large black swell, on going to look at the compass I found Bull at the wheel. Harding, observing me, went to the forward part of the poop. Over and over again I had been on deck when Bull was at the helm, and every hour

had provided an opportunity to speak with him had I chosen to do so. Yet not till this night—it was between eleven and twelve, the decks dark and still, and the ship filling the silent obscurity with a fitful thunder of beating canvas—did I think proper to settle my misgivings.

I entered into talk, warily leading to the subject of Brigstock's scheme, and asked him if he thought the crew had still a good opinion of that man as a leader in a project of colonization.

"Yes, sir," he answered, with all necessary warmth. "We're agreed there could be no better man than Mr. Brigstock for the likes of such an undertaking. He's one of them men there's no imitating. When he's gone up he draws his ladder arter him."

"I've sometimes doubted if he'll get all hands of you to go ashore."

"No fear of their not going," he exclaimed. "I reckon the island my mates now call Bull Island 'll be the settlement."

"*You* know those parts; the others—most of them, anyhow—don't. When they see an

island without houses, white men, any sign of civilization, what then ? ”

“ If it’s my island, it’ll be the island we want ; and it’ll be a bad look-out if we *do* see houses and white men.”

This delighted me. Something in his voice carried conviction.

“ What will your partners think when you show them an island without a roof in it ? They’re not sailors, Bull. They’ve been used to sheets and blankets and ceilings, though of attics.”

He laughed and answered, “ We’ll be having a village built in the inside of a week. Was you ever down amongst the islands ?

“ Never.”

“ The natives build their cottages oval, ’bout sixty feet long and twenty wide ; walls of bamboo, with openings for light and air. They lash a great piece of light strong wood atop with sennit for the support of the rafters, which they cover with mats. The earth’s the floor. They make rooms by hanging up screens.”

“You know all about it.”

“I know a great deal about it,” he answered, talking with some excitement. “You mention blankets and sheets, sir; the first lady in England’s not going to sleep more comfortably in a gilt four-poster with silk curtains, than our partners on a frame of cane, and a pillow stuffed with sweet herbs.”

“I believe that.”

“I remember the master of a vessel,” he went on, “telling another down at Tahiti that a native of that there island may start as a beggar at sunrise without e’er a tool to work with, nor a hole to put his head in, and afore sundown he’s clothed and lodged, out and away better than thousands in England, better than men earning a pound, ay, and two pound a week.”

“How is it done?”

“Out of the cocoa-nut, and the bread-fruit, and the bamboo.”

“No wonder Mr. Brigstock values you as an acquisition, Bull.”

“I’ve been hard-worked long enough, sir,” he exclaimed, with some feeling in his strong,

steady voice. "The chest o' clothes I left aboard the schooner is all I own, and *that*, God forgive me, arter more years of man-killing work than I care to think of. I feel like relishing any sort o' scheme that's agoing to give me ease, that's agoing to let me loaf and take all the sleep I want, where there'll be no skippers and mates, and enough to eat and drink, and civil words."

"That's about the fo'c's'le view."

"About. Why not? A few inconveniences at the start—what's to be said of *they* as agin years of wet bunks, years of pumping the ship out, years of all-night work in living gales, and food that dogs 'ud give their tails to?"

"You'll be making me in love with your scheme," said I, with a short laugh.

"You may depend upon it there's a future afore a settlement of Englishmen in them seas," he said, with a note of Brigstock's earnestness in his voice. "Yes, an' a time may come when our little colony might even see its way to exports. I've bin asked, 'What ha' yer got?' and, arter looking into my

memory—for it's some years since I was in them parts—I've answered, 'First of all, yer might work up a trade in tortoiseshell; then there's cocoanuts, and cocoanut ile; yer may raise arrowroot, and ginger, and coffee. Sugar too's to be considered, and for what might be called light industries, there's the making of straw hats.'

He could not see my face, and for a little I stood silent, shaking with suppressed laughter.

But this was talk mightily to my liking, and I continued it for another half-hour, starting such objections as I thought might occur to the seamen to hinder them from settling, and listening to his answers, all which were plain, straight-headed, and satisfying. I recollect I asked him how the women would arrange for clothes. He replied, "As at Pitcairn, Tristan, and other little settlements." I pointed out that the *Bounty* people had carried off native women to settle with, to whom one island would yield as many of the conveniences they had been used to as another, but that the crew's



pardners were Englishwomen, accustomed to clothes all their lives.

"Ay," said he, "but the descendants of the *Bounty* lot were civilized. Adams made 'em dress. They got stuff for their wants out of passing vessels."

"That," said I, "must leave you dependent upon the outside world for clothes. Should no ship touch, what then?"

"Well, yer see," he replied, "dress is one of them things that needn't trouble any one down in that climate. The natives manage very well on tappa and leaves and feathers."

I called Kate on to the poop next morning, and in a walk that ran into an hour told her of my conversation with Bull, and asked her to get at the views of the women, because, should they hesitate when we rounded into the Pacific, the men would be discouraged and the scheme fall through. She needed time to manage this, for the girls were reluctant to talk, particularly to her. They classed her with those whom they believed sneered at them as degraded and unwomanly.

However, she succeeded first of all in

getting hold of Sall Simmonds, Prentice's choice, a shrill, hysterical, saucy girl, and afterwards of Weatherwax's pardner, Maggie Dobree, who had shipped for Australia as a sempstress, and who, with her tall willowy form, white face, and smooth hair, looked the most respectable of the sailors' choosings.

It was three days after my talk with Bull that Kate came on to the poop of her own accord. It was in the afternoon; the wind was fresh abeam, the ship under single-reefed topsails, a clear sky astern, but over the bows a heap of Cape Horn stuff, sooty, stooping, hoary at its ragged edges as with snow.

Most of the women were below; they found the deck too cold for them, though I had drilled my company for an hour that morning, and the mizzen topgallant sail had been stowed by Corbin, Alice Perry, and two others.

Kate looked charming in a thick cloth jacket and some sort of round, tight-fitting hat. Her eyes had the sparkle of the ocean brine, and all the health of the sea was in her red cheeks and red lips.

"I've come to have a talk with you," said she. "I've spoken to two of the girls, Dobree and Simmonds, and think their views represent the others. Simmonds sees things as you might suppose a forward, thoughtless, and not very intelligent person would. She told me bluntly she wanted a husband, and was sick of service. She likes her man, Prentice, she said, and whatever's good for him is good for her."

"Did you ask how the colony was to clothe itself?"

"Yes. She said ships would bring all that the wives wanted, and be glad to exchange fine things, finer than anything she could afford to buy out of wages, for potatoes, cocoanuts, poultry, and other food."

"It looks as if the women were being made fools of," said I.

"I don't think so," she answered. "Ships *do* barter for food, don't they?"

"Yes. But the vessels likely to touch at Brigstock's island won't be freighted with clothes for women. There are no silks and satins to be found in whalers' holds."

“Perhaps Brigstock says to them, ‘Why take ye thought for raiment?’ and refers them to the lilies,” said she.

“They’ll help themselves, lilies or no lilies, to a good supply out of the stores aboard us. There’s stuff enough to equip them until they sicken and depart.”

“How’ll they get away?”

“They’ll be fetched, I fancy.”

“Well,” said she, “I thought them mad at first, but I now see some glimmer of sanity in the project. The girl Dobree put her case thus: ‘I am a sempstress; I was born at Nottingham, and am an orphan, and for a long while I’ve tried to keep myself alive with my needle, but I assure you, Miss Darnley, if I was not here I should be in the workhouse, or in my grave, dead of want. How do I know what’s going to happen to me in Australia? Mr. Brigstock’s scheme mayn’t prove a certainty for us women, but it *might* lead to better things.’”

“What better things?” I asked.

“She’s romantic, like others of her class. ‘When you’re drowning,’ said she, ‘you’re

not particular what's thrown you!' Those were her words. 'Brigstock's scheme is good enough to float by,' she said."

"She hopes to wash on to a land where there'll be some sunshine of life for her and the like of her, poor thing!" said I.

"I don't think any of them suppose Brigstock's scheme will last. But it's a change, a toy, a novelty. Remember who and what they are. The sailors are their equals, and good enough for them. Wouldn't they keep company, as it's called, with those seamen on shore, suppose they were in service, and the men hung about to take them for walks of a Sunday? At Bristol three servants who had been in my father's service married sailors."

"Ay, but they left them at home; they didn't carry them to an island."

"I declare," said she, so governed by some instant impulse of feeling that her fine speaking eyes glowed as with passion, "if I had been born with the nature and instincts of those women, used all my life to the work they are accustomed to, I'd do as they are doing."

"Take a sailor and live on an island with him?" said I.

"Yes. Anything to get out of the rut of life, anything for a walk of one's own, through but a footpath that wide," she exclaimed, holding up her fingers, "so as not to be bespattered with the mud of the passing carriages, or elbowed into the gutter to make way for Mr. and Mrs. Snob."

"Ay, but imagine Brigstock your husband by virtue of his own recitation of the Marriage Service."

"Hannah Cobbs is very pleased with him."

"He is good enough for Hannah."

"And that's what I mean. Let me be a Kate Davis, and I'll thank you for Jackson as a beau."

"If I consent to join the Brigstock lot, will you be my partner, Kate?"

"You asked me that question before."

"Will you?"

"No."

"Your convictions want courage. You admire this island project, and refuse to be of it."

“It is a good project for those who have formed and are carrying it out,” said she, warmly. “Those girls guess that domestic service in the Colonies is pretty much as it is in England—scarcely better paid, and with all the difference of thousands of miles of ocean rolling between them and home. What have they to look forward to?” she exclaimed bitterly. “Indeed, what are the hopes of the most sanguine amongst us? Their best chance lies in getting husbands in Australia, and those pardners, as you call them, say, ‘We’ll not wait. Here are men willing to take us. They are respectable sailors, bent upon making a home for themselves in the South Pacific!’ They are right,” she cried, with a flashing eye. “I’d do it if I were they. But gentility is restrictive and depressing. It prohibits audacity. So I shall be starving as a governess when those women, whose choice makes you wonder, are living in pretty bamboo cottages, according to Bull, every one with a charming garden of flowers to herself, her own mistress, one of those few lucky ones of life who, ‘having nothing, yet have all.’”

Her temper and advocacy amused and surprised me. But, though our talk left some features of the Brigstock enterprise vague, I was at all events convinced that if the crew carried out their project, the girls of their choice would stick to them.

We doubled the Horn in the mid-winter of the southern hemisphere, but though we met with some heavy weather, the passage did not prove so formidable as I had feared. We struck  $58^{\circ}$  S. and had eighteen hours of darkness a day, with spears of ice at the cat-heads and plunging bowsprit, and more than once the green transparent shadow of an island of ice close aboard, looming through some brooding thickness of polar frost, and motionless on swelling hills of black water.

One narrow escape we had. It was at high noon, though I have known some moonless midnights in England lighter. The air was dark with snow. The figure of the look-out on the forecastle, gleaming like glass in his oilskins, was scarcely distinguishable from the poop. We were forging through it under double-reefed topsails and a reefed



foresail, just looking up to our course; the dark head-sea came slinging along out of the flying thickness of snow in sheets of steel; the surge smote the weather-bow in hurricane shocks, and the soft gloom of the whirling whiteness trembled with a frequent flash of clouds of foam filled with darts and daggers of ice which shrieked across the deck as they fled into the smoky thickness of snow and spray to leeward.

I stood beside the wheel, turning an anxious eye from bow to bow. Prentice was at the helm; Harding, swathed to his heels in painted clothes and sea-helmet, stood aslant at the brass rail forward, grasping it. A true picture of Antarctic desolation, that! The bands of topsails came and went in dull ghastly glares as the ship swept into the olive-dark hollow, leaping again in the next breath till the very coppered bilge of her ruddily streaked the foam of the rushing surge. The scupper-holes hissed their fountains, and it was sometimes up to a man's waist down to leeward.

On a sudden I was sensible of a keener

edge in the wind, a wonderful new sharpness of bite that was like laying your cheek against iron. Harding, at the break of the poop, looked round at that moment.

“Forecastle there!” I shouted, advancing some paces. “Keep a bright look-out for ice.”

As the words left my lips a loud voice answered me—

“Ice right ahead, sir.”

“Hard up!” I yelled.

Prentice was at the wheel; I sprang to his assistance. The ship paid off nobly, swinging round in a stately sinking, upon the slope of a great green sea, and to the right of her slowly circling jibboom there sprang out of the hoary blinding chaos a monstrous mass of ice, an island that looked the more awful and vast because of the snow and spray and flying shadows of inky vapour which nearly concealed it—glances only on high of hard white crystal projections, abrupt ascending walls, spear-headed pinnacles, shapes as of huge couchant beasts seen and lost in the wink of an eye, in the wool-white

whirl. The mass was full of thunder, which smote the ear in hollow booming shocks ; I guessed the weight of the sea by that noise, and by the mountains of spray which roared in recoil from the frozen, lifeless, motionless mass.

In a minute it was gone, but such a peril we had no mind to meet again ; in another two minutes we should have been into it, stem on, the ship telescoping to amidships, and the whole life of her going out in one great shriek. So, till the weather cleared, we furled everything but the maintopsail and foretopmast staysail, backing the fore and after yards, and left the rest to the vessel.

Yet, though on the whole our doubling of the Horn proved a lighter business than I had dared count on at that season of the year, it made a bad time for the girls. As before in heavy weather, so now, I brought them into the cuddy, where they lived for the most part, sleeping on deck and in the cabins, though some twenty of them continued to occupy the 'tweendecks. Once again I sur-

rendered my berth at night to Kate Darnley and five others.

I got but little sleep; my anxieties were very heavy. I was the sole navigator aboard, the whole safety of the ship depended upon me, and, for lack of officers to help prop the burthen, the weight was crushing during those black bitter days of the Horn.

The weather and the cold miserably subdued and depressed the women. I see them now in my mind's eye sitting in rows in the cuddy, hugging their wraps about them, seldom speaking, staring at one another, scarce venturing to stir, so desperate was the plunging of the ship. For three days they fared vilely, as indeed did we all. Wambold came floundering aft and told me he must give up. He could not keep his fire alight, and the galley was uninhabitable. So in those days we got nothing hot to eat or drink.

Once Alice Perry was seized with a shrieking fit of temper. She caught sight of me as I came down the companion into the

cuddy, and in a yelling voice asked me if I thought it right that "us poor gells should be brought into these 'owling frozen parts of the world, to be starved first and then drowned by being busted against icebergs, when the ship's proper road lay the other way, where there was plenty of sun and smooth water? If it wasn't for Brigstock and Cobbs we'd all be in Australia by this time."

She then let fly at Miss Cobbs, who sat nearly opposite, her face pinched by the cold into a few pale blue lines betwixt her sausage curls, the back of her bonnet crushed by being repeatedly knocked against the bulkheads, hugging herself to the heart under a plaid shawl, over which Brigstock had thrown a fur-lined coat belonging to Latto, late second mate.

The girl's passion made a hellish picture. Her rage worked in throes, and blackened and convulsed her; her screams rang through the cuddy like the piping of the boatswain's whistle she was now and had for some time been wearing. And her fury was contagious.

Fifteen or twenty women, one after another, and then altogether, turned the hoses of their tongues on Miss Cobbs and played her with the boiling water of their wrath. Kate and two others were reading in my cabin; I stood looking on a minute or two, and then went on deck to wait till the uproar ended. When I returned a number of women were crying, and Miss Cobbs sat bolt upright, looking as if she had been frozen to death.

## CHAPTER V.

## MY OATH.

It was a Monday morning. A light breeze, soft and sweet, blew off the starboard quarter; lower and topmast studding-sails had been set to hold it, and the ship, with stirless wings and on a level keel, and over a wide majestic heave of swell, leisurely rippled onwards, the sparkling blue of the Pacific around, and over her gilded trucks a clear heaven of azure dazzling with the cloudless morning light.

Two girls clothed in male attire were at the ship's wheel; beside them stood Sampson, whose "trick" it was—he had relinquished the spokes, but remained by my orders to con and instruct. Five other girls, dressed as men, walked here and there about the poop. They, and those who were steering

were my helmsmen, seven in all; namely, Alice Perry, Charlotte Brown, Flo' Lewis, Katherine Hale, Ellen Clark, Mary Barker, and Susannah Corbin, their ages ranging from thirty to, in the case of Mary Barker, eighteen.

These girls being dressed as they were, I kept aft, though five of them were done with the helm, and the others would quit it shortly. But the truth is, though the crew were civil, and even distant to the women who were not their "pardners," they showed a disposition to chaff and take liberties when the girls were clad as men. Moreover, the cuddy was my crew's dressing-room; there they kept their male clothes, and there they shifted themselves before coming on deck and after going below.

The ship was gay that morning with the crowd that filled her decks. All warm apparel had been stowed away; the Horn was far astern; the temperature that of a warm English June, kept cool with the ceaseless refreshment of the salt breast of ocean, and the women were dressed in cottons and



colours once more, in feathered hats and bonnets and serge, and there was a plentiful twinkle of Brummagem splendour.

The galley chimney was smoking bravely ; they had killed a pig and there was to be a fresh mess at noon. Kate sat in the gangway, reading aloud to a listening group from a book. Over against her to starboard sat Miss Cobbs, in company with seven or eight of the “pardners,” with whom she talked earnestly. Near *them* stalked Brigstock. He occasionally directed a thoughtful look at me when I approached the break of the poop, and his air was that of a man who waits. A knot of sailors gossiped on the forecastle-head ; they were in Harding’s watch and he had charge—they were therefore on duty—but ever since the Horn the crew had done little or nothing save handling the braces and making and shortening sail. I had nothing to say. I was not their captain. Enough for me that they continued sober and quiet.

I leaned over the rail to catch a view of the clock under the break.

"It's 'arf-past eleven, capt'n," said a woman.

I thanked her, and turning to Alice Perry, told her to pipe the helmswomen below to shift clothes. She blew a shrill turn very neatly and quick; a pair of gold earrings would not have pleased her better as a gift than had the silver toy she piped on, that dangled in sight upon her breast, no matter how she was attired.

At once, the two girls at the wheel abandoned it to Sampson, and the seven of them, chatting and laughing, danced below.

I followed to fetch my sextant. All the while I worked at the sun Brigstock paced the waist, with a frequent dull lift of his eyes at me. "What does he want?" thought I. His glances, his grave formal stumping to and fro in one place, made me uneasy.

After making eight bells I went below. By this time the girls had changed and were gone; Gouger was lazily preparing the table for dinner. I passed into my cabin and worked out the latitude, and just when I

was done, a knock sounded, and Brigstock asked leave to enter. He walked in slowly; his manner was awkward and constrained; he held a fur cap in his hands and twisted it, whilst he brought his dark peculiar eyes to bear upon my face as though it gave him trouble to look straight.

“Jer mind letting me know where the ship is to-day?” said he.

I was sure more was signified by his presence than *that* question implied; but, controlling my uneasiness by swift consideration that until the island was in sight the crew were as helpless as though the vessel was in the middle of a shoreless ocean, I gave him the latitude and pointed to the ship’s position on the chart.

He put his magnifying spectacles on and stooped his nose to the sheet, and after a pause said, “It’s a-drawing pretty nigh.”

“It is.”

“How fur off jer reckon it, capt’n?” said he, with his eyes upon the chart.

“With anything of a wind the island should be in sight to-morrow afternoon.”

He continued to gaze; then, with movements of his hand which suggested agitation to my uneasy mood, he removed his spectacles.

"Capt'n," said he in his level, Lenten voice, "yer've acted like a gentleman, and we're obliged to yer."

I responded with a sharp nod.

"And I think yer'll agree, capt'n, that the crew have testified their sense of the hobligations they're under by acting like *men*."

"They've acted well."

"They've tried ter. I've bin a-watching of 'em closely all along. 'Ticularly Bull. One black tooth 'll spoil a set of white uns. If one fiddle-string's wrong yer'll find it a job to play all the tunes yer want. I'm satisfied myself with the men, from Bull down, and, all things considered, I allow I've a right ter. Now, sir, I hope yer'll not be offended at what I'm agoing to say."

"Say on," I exclaimed, plunging my hands in my pockets, and holding the deck, so to speak, with a firmer grip of foot.

“Yer’ve acted like a gentleman—I dorn’t want to give no offence.”

“I’ve obeyed the Scriptural injunction,” said I, looking at him. “‘Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain!’ I’ve done *that*.”

“And more,” said he earnestly, as though impressed by my quotation. “Capt’n, what us men wants yer to do is to take a hoath.”

“An oath?”

“A hoath,” he repeated, “like to what you read out to us, only different, in the presence of all hands and the females, as ourn was.”

“You’re deuced long-winded, Mr. Brigstock,” cried I, in a torment of anxiety that was fast heating me into a passion. “What do you want me to take an oath about?”

“That if, under Providence,” said he in his deepest, most deliberate utterance, “yer’ll be lucky enough to carry this ship to port, yer’ll not tell the situation of the island yer’ll leave us on.”

I fetched a deep breath of sudden relief. Was that all?

I stood thinking with my eyes fastened upon him, then said—

“Consider. Suppose your partners repent their decision; you, as much as they—the whole of you all round—might find reason to be grateful that an expedition was sent in search of you.”

“No,” he roared. Then, checking himself with a self-control I envied in him, so quickly it worked, so powerful was the will it disclosed, he exclaimed, “No good starting constitootions to be broke up by hexpeditions. I’ll be square with yer, capt’n. The long an’ short’s this. Me and the others have had plenty of time to talk things over, and we’ve decided to help ourselves to a little more of what this vessel contains than we originally proposed. We reckon we’ve got a right to the goods—what Bull calls a *line* upon ’em, a legal tarm signifying a right to property where money’s owed. Money’s owed to us as wages; likewise on salvage. What would ha’ become of this ship but for us? We also allow—it’s Bull’s reasoning—that we’ve got a claim for the saving of life.

Why shouldn't we pay ourselves out of what's underfoot, seeing but for us the whole biling, women and all, might have been at the bottom long ago?"

"True."

"But it's more'n likely our claims won't be allowed by them as owns the cargo. Therefore we're for asking yer to take an oath not to reveal the island yer'll leave us upon."

"You had better *compel* me."

"Yer'll have ter, anyhow," said he, with a grave smile.

"How much do you mean to take?"

He again put on his glasses and pulled out a piece of paper—the flyleaf of a book—on which he mused a minute, then said—

"We calculate our wants 'll amount to about this;" and he read—"Long-boat and one quarter-boat, with all necessary gear; such hagricultural implements as we may choose; clothing to go on with; spare sails for tents; beddin'; carpenter's tool-chest; chest of small-arms and the hammunion we may meet with; the timepiece and the

ship's bell ; provisions. Other hitems 'll consist of sailmakers' stores, along with a spare compass, and the likes of that."

I listened with exultation. This catalogue made the island scheme more real than ever I had been able to find it since they stole me. Then there was the feeling of relief, too ; for his looks when he stumped the deck, and his coming to me with his solemn face and agitated gesture, had frightened me horribly.

I had time to compose my countenance whilst he pulled off his glasses and pocketed the paper. I then told him I considered his list moderate and reasonable ; it would matter nothing to me, I said, if they stripped the ship, so long as they left enough to eat and drink in her to carry us seventy or eighty souls to port ; only the more they took the likelier the chance of their being searched for, oath or no oath. If they helped themselves in reason under the circumstances nothing might be said.

He answered, he agreed with that, and no more would be taken than was needful to



keep twenty-six people going until they had had time to look around.

“ You talk of twenty-six,” said I. “ Will no others than your pardners accompany you ? ”

“ We don’t want no others. I’ve thought it over. Others without husbands might lead to trouble. We’re opposed to all chitty-chatty, as the French tarm it, and scandal. No use a-laying on gas if you don’t want to burn it. Will yer take the hoath, sir ? ”

“ Yes ; and I wish it administered as you propose, that there may be plenty to say I took it.”

“ This afternoon ? ”

“ Eight bells.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

He was going. “ Stop,” said I. “ If Bull’s island’s to your liking you’ll go ashore ? ”

“ As prompt as possible. We’re not for keeping the women washing about.”

“ If it don’t satisfy you ? ”

“ Then I’m sorry to say we shall have to

ask yer to keep all on till we can find what we want," he answered.

Though there was a little damp to my hopes in this answer of his, seeing the possibilities it gave one a glimpse of, yet never since I had sailed from Bristol had I been in such spirits. I whistled; my heart danced; I could have capered about the cabin. It was like kicking off a heavy pair of boots when you're swimming; there was distance to be measured—I might be drowned; but oh, the momentary thrill of lightness and buoyancy, and the joy of the new courage, of the larger hope!

Day after day and night after night for weeks had my mind been strained by suspense. Would they abandon the island scheme? Would they deliver up the ship to me? Would anything happen fatal to my own consuming desire—a very passion of ambition it was!—to carry the vessel and her crowd of poor passengers single-handed to Sydney? I'll not sham for a moment that it was *all* humanity. Certainly I hoped for a considerable reward, both in command

and money, but I was also very much in earnest in wishing with mine own single hand, so to speak, to deliver all these poor women from the dire peril they had been in since that hour of Rolt's death and the captain's blindness ; and desire was also sharpened by vanity. I was a young fellow, and liked to believe I should be talked of. Often I'd smile when I thought of myself as being looked at as the young skipper who had carried an emigrant ship to Sydney without a crew, worked by females only.

I don't fancy it had been realized aboard how close the ship was to the place assigned by Bull to his island, till Brigstock took the news forward that day after leaving me. He kept with the men, and did not join me at table. When I went on deck after dinner, I observed in the general bearing the impression the news had produced. A sort of quiet hung upon the ship ; the women talked low ; the familiar laugh, the familiar high-pitched note was rare ; a number of the girls dreamily overhung the bulwark-rails, with their eyes on the sea, as though expecting a sight of

land. I saw Bull, with a piece of chalk, drawing pictures on the deck abreast of the galley, some sailors and women watching. I also saw Brigstock carefully examining the long-boat. If they took that boat and another, they'd still leave the ship with two and the gig, which they had hoisted after taking me out of her.

Kate came up out of the 'tweendecks, and seeing me, stood gazing wistfully. I called to her to come up, and she promptly arrived.

"What do they want us all to assemble on deck for?" said she.

"Has the order gone forth?"

"Miss Cobbs has made the rounds, asking us all to collect, as on the occasion when you administered an oath to the men. She won't say what for. Perhaps she doesn't know. We live in a continual state of dread."

"The crew intend to make me take an oath."

"You?" she cried, starting, opening her eyes, halting in an arrest of sudden, sincere fright, which whitened through her face till she looked as sallow as a nun.

“Don’t be afraid. They wish——” And I told her what the crew wanted.

“Are you sure that’s all?” she exclaimed.

“That’s all.”

“Well,” she said, letting her breath go in a great sigh, “I had made up my mind, if they sent you away, to go with you.”

“I’d have taken you.”

“I couldn’t go on as we are,” she cried, “even with you in command. But to be left with the crew! If they sent you away, I’d go with you;” and she set her teeth.

It was not long, however, before I made her mind easy, and we had a good earnest talk about the discipline I meant to put in force when the men were gone.

All this while the ship rippled through it, under one unvarying pressure of soft sweet wind, aloft everything motionless, of a moon-like whiteness against the blue, and a streak of water alongside, bubbling brook-like into a narrow wake of feathers and jewels of foam. It was a perfect South Pacific day; the lazy whaler’s ideal of weather, when there’s nothing to be done but lounge over

the windlass-end, pipe in mouth, and let the warm wind waft you.

By four o'clock the women had gathered on the quarter-deck on either hand the capstan, as on that day when I swore the crew; I kept Kate by my side. The girls did not seem to know why they had been asked to come together again, and their faces were constantly rounding my way, when I approached the break of the poop, walking with Kate.

Some one struck eight bells. Brigstock then came from forward, bearing his big Bible, and the sailors walked in his wake as in a funeral procession. I observed relish of this sort of thing strong in Brigstock's long face: he loved the ceremony in which he prominently figured. He came to the capstan, and put his Bible upon it, and the men drew together in a group, a great crowd of women on either hand, most of them staring up at me with looks of perplexity and fear.

I kept on the poop till I saw they were waiting, then leisurely, and with all the

dignity of deportment I could command, went down the ladder and advanced to the capstan.

“What’s a-going to happen?” cried Alice Perry in one of her wild, screaming, ringing notes, leaping from the starboard crowd like a bent band of steel released, her eyes on fire and fury in her face. “What are you going to do to the capt’n? S’elp me God! if there’s e’er a one as lays a finger on ’im, I’ll knife the devil, though you kills me next minute;” and, so shrieking, she whipped a table-knife out of her pocket.

Miss Cobbs shrieked.

“If yer don’t fling that down——!” exclaimed the seaman Luddy, rounding upon the girl with a ferocious scowl.

I was at her side, even as the man was speaking.

“Give that to me,” said I. “They don’t mean to hurt me.”

“I’ll be sure of that first,” she screamed, wrestling, and the knife glanced above her head with my hand upon her wrist.

“Girls! girls! shall we let the men send

our capt'n away, for us to be alone with 'em, now he's done all the work and the island's close?" howled Susannah Corbin; and in a trice, amid cries as wild as the whistling of a gale, thirty or forty women came in a rush around me, encompassing Perry's and my struggling figure.

"They shan't touch you!"

"We'll kill 'em sooner!"

"We don't care what happens—we'll not be alone with 'em!"

"You're capt'n, and if you're sent away there'll be no one to look to."

These, and fifty like cries yelped and yelled and screamed altogether, combined into a continuous stream of ear-piercing, soul-confounding noise, beyond all art of words to convey. The knife fell from Alice Perry's hand. I stooped, got it, and flung it overboard.

"Silence!" I roared. "Silence, I beg, whilst I speak;" and, putting my hand on Perry's shoulder, rearing my stature to the topmost of its inches to get command with my eyes, I bawled out that all was right—



the men desired me to take an oath—no mischief, nothing but kindness was intended—and by virtue of superior lungs I shouted the women into silence. Then, with coaxing gestures, and repeated assurances that all was well, delivered in tones that might have been a lover's, I got Perry back again into her place, and with her came others; so that, in eight or ten minutes, I had cleared the deck, that is, got the people grouped as before, and once more stepped to the capstan.

But I own I was deeply agitated. I trembled, and knew myself pale. Indeed, something bloody and terrific in ocean tragedy, outside all record of marine horrors, had been averted by the very dark of one's finger-nail, as they say. In another minute, Perry's knife would have been in some man's heart, and then, oh, my God! I feel sick when I think of it, after all these years. The sudden loosing of forecastle passions, of passions wilder and ghastlier still in the thirteen chosen females fighting on the men's side against the crowd of women!

Brigstock was as pale as any blank page

in his Bible; the seamen glanced threateningly about as though fearful of foul play, hidden knives, sudden murderous surprises. The hush of at least a minute that followed was extraordinarily impressive—not a whisper! nothing but the angry breathing of the seamen standing near me, and the noise of rippling waters.

Then Brigstock, sucking in a big breath—in a voice which betokened that his perception of our escape from a business that might have proved a massacre was as acute at all events as mine, said—

“Captain Morgan, yer know no harm’s meant.”

“None. Now recite the oath.”

In a broken voice, his breathing laboured, after putting the Bible into my hand, he dictated an oath ungrammatical, pompous, and confused in phrase and construction to the verge of unintelligibility. I was to swear I would not reveal the whereabouts of the island occupied by the settlers; also that I would not make any entries in the log-book calculated to furnish a clue; and the terms of

the oath granted Mr. Brigstock permission to tear out of the said log-book as many pages as he and the crew might think proper.

Bare-headed, I kissed the Bible with all proper reverence, and then, addressing the women, exclaimed—

“Ladies, you have heard me swear not to reveal the place where Mr. Brigstock and his party go ashore. Though no threats have been used, I am glad to say, Mr. Brigstock will tell you it was his and the crew’s intention to *compel* me to take this oath. That’s so, I think?” said I, looking round to Brigstock.

“We shouldn’t have left the ship without it,” he answered. “We’ve a right to warrant ourselves against intrusion till such time as the settlement shall become too flourishing to be meddled with. It was the case with Pitcairn. Had a man-o’-war lighted on the mutineers, she’d ha’ taken ’em. Long arter the trouble, a man-o’-war fell in with the island, and found the settlers’ descendants with one original mutineer among ’em, old

Adams. They left him to carry on his duties as father and magistrate, and sailed away himpressed and hedified by what they'd seen. That's how I mean it to be with us," said he, with a glance at the crew. "Not that we're mutineers, God knows; but the little we're agoing to take might lead to difficulties there's no call to provoke."

"Very well. It's now understood by all these witnesses," said I, with a flourish of my hand to right and left, "that I've taken an oath, under compulsion, not to betray the secret of your whereabouts."

I pronounced these words clearly and with emphasis, then, lifting my hat, went into the cuddy.

## CHAPTER VI.

## BULL'S ISLAND.

No reference was made by Brigstock or Harding to the scene on the quarter-deck. I was afraid the crew would fasten upon Perry, lock her up, in some fashion punish her. Afraid, I say, because in that case I must have stood forward, with the prospect of bringing about vile, heavy, tragic trouble on the very eve of the men's leaving us. Nothing was said or done, at least in my hearing or seeing. For the rest of the day I kept my eye on Perry when she was on deck, but never saw that she was addressed or interfered with by the crew.

Indeed, the prospect of the island showing next day lay like an influence upon the ship. The sailors lounged on the forecastle with

their pardners, gazing ahead. Brigstock was restless, coming again and again to the compass, looking round at the sea, going forward and talking with the men; sometimes, in passages of silence, I'd hear his deep voice thrilling near the galley.

I need not say my own anxiety was heavy and wearing to the last degree. I was in seas almost new to me, sole navigator of the ship; in an ocean full of islands and shoals, many at that time uncharted. Then, had Bull's island existence in the place he named it as lying in—seven and twenty leagues east of Hercules Island? Or supposing the island there, yet it might not suit the men either, in which case I was to find one to please them. And how long was that to take—with the anxieties of a perilous navigation attending the quest, a hundred lives in the vessel, and vicious threats in looks, deportment, and speech of further delay exasperating the women into behaviour that might make a hell of the craft?

But to proceed. The afternoon passed quietly under the subduing influence of the

general expectation. The second dog-watch was one of ruddy splendour, the heavens of a burning gold westwards, and the sea streaming and sheeting in sapphire out of the east, winding into gold upon the horizon as it swept to the setting sun, under which it trembled, glorious as the effulgence it mirrored. The breeze of the day still blew, soft and sweet as the air of the seashore, where the smell of brine blends with the scent of orchard and meadow, and the ship, with wings of studding-sail stretching far beyond the yardarms, floated north-west with the sunset before eight bells dimming on the port bow, and the sky darkening into starlight on the quarter.

Luckily I could count upon a bright moon by ten. Before it fell night-dark I ordered the studding-sails to be hauled down and sail shortened to the maintopgallant-sail, leaving the mainsail to hang through the quiet night in the festooning grip of its gear. When this was done the hour was about two bells—nine o'clock. The ship sat upon the sea like a shadowy fabric of

alabaster ; a long sighing sort of swell ran through the dark ocean in wide breathings abeam ; and the arc of the ship's roll was scarce four times the diameter of the moon. Until *she* rose to pale the firmament, I had never before beheld a grander play of meteors. They sailed over our trucks like a legion of fireflies running athwart one another's hawse ; the stars sparkled placidly and blandly above them ; and at our mizzen-peak end, poised there as though by the signal-halliards, hung for a space that vastly over-estimated jewel of the heavens, the Southern Cross.

Although I had no reason to suppose we were near any shoal or land invisible by such starshine as we had, or by such moonlight as was to come, I nevertheless told Brigstock to get a cast of the lead from time to time. I had heard of low coral islands in these seas, like a fleet at anchor, through your seeing nothing but trees, which come and go as the vessel pitches. To be sure there was no magic in the lead to provide against running foul of some steep-to concern



of *that* sort, and still I ordered Brigstock to get a cast from time to time.

I was also careful to keep the log going. Under reduced canvas, at nine o'clock the ship was passing through the water at five and a half knots; the green fire burnt in the holes in her furrow, and very steady on our quarter, within pistol-shot, back-fin clear, floated at the exact speed of the ship a large phosphorescent shape of shark—big as a grampus he looked in his husk of luminous mist.

The women hung about the decks till a late hour this night; they were too restless and excited to turn in at the usual hour. I called a number of them up to look at the wonderful picture the shark made. Amongst these were many of my crew; and they liked this part of the deck so well, I would not suffer Mr. Harding, who had charge till midnight, to order them off.

When the moon rose and shone white, making ivory of the decks, with the shadows of the rigging, in every trance betwixt the rolls, looking like ebony inlaid, it was the

strangest thing to see the crowds of women moving about the main-deck. Their clothes were tinged with silver and their shapes seemed unsubstantial; the only solid part were their ink-black shadows. From time to time, at considerable intervals, a voice sang hoarsely in the fore-chains, and went to pieces in twenty echoes aloft.

I put Kate's arm under mine for a turn, and kept her at my side for an hour. I was feverish with thought, and it did me good to talk. Was the island where Bull said it was? Would the men be satisfied with it? Would the women shrink at the last moment? Would there be recoil in any of the crew when the spot, repellent in loneliness in proportion as it was appealing in beauty, hung within an easy pull? I could talk about nothing else.

Somewhere about five bells, whilst I was looking at the wake of light under the moon—a broad, trembling, glorious breast it was!—I saw a ship swim into it about four miles off, a black, lean shape, the sharp of her sails being at us. She was probably a whaler.

It was the first vessel we had sighted for weeks, and I looked at her with as much interest as though I had never seen a ship before. The sight of her strangely accented the thought of land being near.

Brigstock came up from the main-deck, and solemnly pointed to her while she was still under the moon.

"Yes," said I, "I've been watching her. Pity she's not within hail. She might be able to give us some news of Bull's island."

"We'd rather not ask her for any noose," he said, his long face grey in the silver light. "She'd be putting two and two together, and giving in the report yer on yer oath to keep dark, capt'n."

"Well, you may be right," said I. "Still I should have been glad to compare time and get a hint or two."

"There's no fear of your navigation agoing wrong," said he, smiling. "I only wish I had yer eddication and science. But may I ask, sir, if yer still determined to work this ship with women when we leave her?"

"Yes."

“I’ve thought it over, and dorn’t see how’s it to answer.”

“Remove your thirteen partners,” said I, pointing to the women who lingered on the poop and main-deck, “and still that crowd’s but a very little smaller. Now consider. I’m aft here as the only officer, unarmed and helpless. It’s such another night as this, and in or on that forecastle there are eight or ten fellows, shipped no matter how. Something happens—there are ruffians among them; one scoundrel there *must* be—show me a ship’s fo’c’s’le without *him*. Why, Mr. Brigstock, you don’t want much imagination to see what I’m driving at. With you on board and those twelve or thirteen fellows tractable and quiet under you, all’s well. But when you and your party are gone, I’m the only man in all the oceans of this world who’s going to carry this ship to port.”

He stood silent in meditation, looking along the decks.

“Capt’n,” said he, “putting it as yer have, I allow you’re right.”

I was up and about all night. The lead

was kept going, but at long intervals. The breeze blew with a wonderful soft tenderness ; never so much as a puff of vapour soiled the starry sky. It was an exquisite night indeed—a marvellous sweet climate. There was the fragrance of the moon-lily in it, and often I'd fancy a pleasant scent in the wind as though land was near.

Bull, who had the wheel from twelve till two, asked me if it was strange that the natives in those parts of the great ocean found a bamboo house and a suit of tappa shelter and clothing enough all the year round. Upon my word, when I looked up at the deep sparkling sky, with the moonlight melting and steeping to the furthest reaches, and tasted the soft air, and put before my mind's eye such another island as Bull had sketched, and then reflected upon the sort of homes and lives such women as Kate Davis and Sarah Salmon and others were fresh from, the yearly round of dull hard work they would have to enter upon in Australia, I couldn't help seeing some wisdom in Brigstock's scheme and its acceptance by the

females. It would be their own fault if in time the settlers did not flourish as a community, enjoying full liberty, living under laws of their own making, good for their peculiar and particular state, nurtured by a bountiful mother, unchallenged lords and ladies of the isle that fed and clothed them.

I left the deck at dawn. Nothing was then in sight. I had scanned the sea-line eagerly whilst it swept back against the lilac of day-break ere sunrise flashed it into blue. I was worn out with anxiety, expectation, and want of sleep, and lay down fully clothed in my cabin for an off-shore spell of twenty minutes. I slept a little more than half an hour, and was then disturbed.

“What is it?”

“There’s land right ahead, sir,” said Brigstock, holding the door open.

“Ha!”

I jumped for the telescope, and was on deck in a minute. About two points on the port bow, the wind still blowing over the starboard quarter, was the shadow of land. I levelled the glass at it. The lenses made a

firm blue heap of the shadow. It was land, and no deceit of cloud.

“Make sail on the ship, Mr. Brigstock. Heap it on her,” said I.

Royals and topgallant-sails were set, studding-sails run aloft; the breeze was gushing with a trade-wind's steadiness. The ocean floated like a lake upon its own long-drawn cradling breathings. We hove the log, and found the speed six.

“In another hour Bull will be able to tell us if that's his island,” said I to Brigstock.

When news that land was in sight got below the women sprang from their beds, dressed themselves in a fury of hurry and excitement, and rushed on deck as though to some loud and fearful summons. It was the first bit of land they had seen for two months, and they crowded on to the forecandle, thirstily staring, and crying out and exclaiming in notes like a noise of monkeys and parrots. They made a difficulty in getting breakfast: some of the girls refused to leave the deck to take the tea and cocoa below. All the sensations and passions of the voyage might

have been packed into this time of waiting whilst the ship blew leisurely onwards, and the land hardened and enlarged, changing from airy blue into silvery green.

It was shortly after ten that, spying Bull on the fok'sle, I called him.

"Take this glass," said I, "and tell me if that land there is your island?"

He put the tubes upon the rail and knelt. Expectation was now at its highest pitch. The quarter-deck was a surface of pale faces staring up at us; that is at me, Brigstock and Harding, and at Bull kneeling and looking. In a transport of impatience Brigstock called out—

"Can't yer make anything of it, Tom?"

Still Bull looked; all the fat of him with his three chins and horse-rump breadth of shoulder was in that dogged feeding gaze, making the very intention that held his eye at the telescope as massive in suggestion as something heavy with flesh. Still kneeling, he looked up and nodded at Brigstock.

"It is then?" exclaimed Harding.

"To the littlest blade of grass upon it,



smother me!" answered Bull, and he got upon his feet.

Brigstock pulled off his cap and, looking at me with a twitch or two in his lip, his black eyes expressive of astonishment and respect, exclaimed—

"We trusted jer, sir, and yer've justified our faith. Capt'n, in the crew's name I thank yer, and whether she suits or not"—and here he pointed to the island—"we'll fore and aft be always for allowing that it was well done."

I thought this very handsome of Brigstock, and thanked him with a smile and a careless assurance that a man must be a poor navigator not to make land when its situation is settled. Nevertheless, secretly I counted this bringing an uncharted island right under my bow in waters unknown to me no contemptible feat, perhaps not wanting in luck either; for had Bull been out by twenty miles I should have missed the place.

"It's Bull's island right enough, mates?" roared Harding to the forecandle.

But there was nothing to cheer. Would

the island suit? It was *that* which worked in me now, and I knelt as Bull had, to take for the twentieth time another look at the silver-green heap.

Approaching it as we were from the southwest, it was hove up by this time into an irregular outline ; a block of shelving terraced stuff to the left, inland a rise that was scarcely a hill, then a long sweep of land going away down into the sea, disappearing in a tremble of surf. The women were crowding the bulwarks again to look ; the seamen with their partners filled the fok'sle-head with twenty figures ; Prentice was at the wheel ; Brigstock kept aft with me, and sometimes we walked, talking, and sometimes we paused to look at the growing land.

By-and-by I said, " In stun'sails, Mr. Brigstock, and put a leadsman in the chains. Also send Bull on to the flying-jibboom end, and let him keep a bright look-out on the water ahead."

This was done, the men rushing about eagerly and nimbly. I then ordered them to rig the stunsail-booms in and to shorten

sail down to the maintopgallant-sail as before, furling everything that was clewed up. This work brought us to hard upon twelve, which hour I made by an observation of the sun, being anxious to fix the island to my satisfaction, in case we should be blown away.

The women got but a poor dinner; in fact, Wambold, in the excitement of that time, had forgotten to boil the 'tweendecks soup and duff, and there was nothing to eat but pork, of which, happily, in a lucid interval, he had dropped the emigrants' allowance into his coppers.

Some of the girls wanted to make a trouble of this. Emma Marks came up through the hatch with a piece of pork in a tin dish, and shrieked up at me—

“See 'ere! this is all! and Brigstock knows it's forbid! Am I to be starved 'cause of this messing about after an island which don't concern them as ought to be in Orstralia by this? Look how I dine!” yelled the odious black creature, and she threw the pork over the rail into the sea.

I called to Gouger to give the girl some-

thing to eat out of the pantry, and to escape the trouble I saw threatened in the faces of others, I walked aft.

Soon after we had come into these seas, that is when we had struck the fine weather parallels, the men had got the chain cables up, and made all ready with the ground-tackle. It remained to be seen, however, whether, supposing the island was to the taste of the people, it would be safer to lie off under command of the helm than to bring up; and if the latter, whether we should find holding ground. By half-past one o'clock we were within a mile, with no bottom in reach of the lead.

It was a feast to the sight after our long weeks of brine; perhaps a deeper spirit of beauty than belonged to it, went into that richly draped and brightly feathered isle out of the wonder that the freshness and novelty of it raised in us. It showed us a foreshore of three miles as it bore, and ran away inland perhaps four or five; it was swollen with undulations lifting in glittering billows of verdure to a central elevation of about two

hundred feet. I saw the gleams of waterfalls like sparkling mist; Bull, who stood near me, said that to the best of his recollection the great lagoon was to the nor'rard round the point; the Pacific comber broken by creeks and inlets melted in white flashes upon the whiter dazzle of the beach. In some places the vegetation came down thick as a wood to where the glistening line of strand ruled it off sharp.

I turned the telescope in all directions, but saw no habitation, no sign of life. This was not extraordinary, for in some parts down here the natives are migratory; sometimes they are driven out by war; more than one island-Eden such as Pitcairn and Norfolk has been touched at and found empty of human life; others vacant, though with memorials of skilled labour and an advanced civilization; but still whilst I looked at that beautiful coast I expected at any moment to see a swarm of canoes glide like insects from one of the many green and shadowed creeks.

The women gazed fascinated. Many were

on the forecastle, a crowd along the bulwarks, a number on the poop ; they hummed in talk with frequent clear cries and sharp calls, one to another. The rich scene was a revelation to them, and I suspected that many would be thinking, whilst they looked, that the seamen's pardners were not the debased fools they had been called.

When the ship had been brought to a stand, the wind blowing softly always from the south-east, and the sea rippling silkily to the very lift of the opal-hued comber, arching snake-like for the shoreward run, Brigstock with as respectful, composed a demeanour as ever he had worn, though you might have noticed a little colour of triumph and importance in his bearing and looks, asked leave to take charge of the going ashore job.

"Oh, certainly," said I ; "do what you like. I hope the island will suit you."

"I think it will," said he in his deep voice, with a glance at it.

He then called the crew on to the poop, Susannah Corbin taking the wheel at my request, that the seaman there might join the

sailors' council. I beckoned Kate from the main-deck, and walked right aft with her, that I might not appear to attend to what the men said.

"What a beautiful island it is!" Kate exclaimed, her face alight with the pleasure the sight gave her.

"Pray Heaven they decide to take it, that we may be off."

"What are they going to do?"

"Jaw a bit," said I.

"Some of the pardners are in transports," she exclaimed. "Jess Honeyball, standing near me with Isabella Dobson, cried out just now, 'Oh, what a lovely home it will make! Tom shall build our house *there*.' 'And Dick shall build ours *there*,' said Dobson."

"It's happened before," said I, "and is therefore true. But it's hard to realize, even while it's doing under one's very nose." And then I clenched my fists and worked my arms, softly crying, "Lord, if they will but decide upon it, that we may be off—that we may be off!"

The seamen, with Brigstock in the midst

of them, talked in a close group just forward of the mizzenmast. I was at no pains to catch what they said. After a little, three or four went off the poop, but they returned in a short time with three ship's muskets, four pistols, and three or four cutlasses—no doubt all the small-arms chest held; for in those days, as perhaps in these, the merchantman went afloat very ill equipped for purposes of defence.

One of the men handed Brigstock a large flask of powder, with which, one after another, they loaded their weapons. (Observe here that Brigstock knew of the arms chest and ammunition by occupying the berth where they were; I had never entered his sleeping-place from the hour of setting foot in the ship.) They then approached one of the port quarter-boats, and whilst they were clearing her away, Brigstock came along to where I sat with Kate to tell me he and Bull and six seamen were going ashore to thoroughly overhaul the island. I told him I'd keep the ship hove-to; should a change of weather happen, they must return quickly.



By this time the boat was lowered ; it was then three o'clock, the afternoon exquisitely fair and serene. Brigstock dropped into the boat by the falls, their oars rose and fell, and away they went, followed by a loud cheering from the remaining sailors and all the pardners.

"Choose a good place for us, Isaac," yelled Emma Grubb.

"Down by the water, Bill ; down by the water for me !" shrieked Sall Simmonds. "It's to be a cottage by the sea for us two."

"Don't forget your Soosie, Thomas," cried Bull's pardner.

The fellows, laughing and shouting back, gave way with a will, and were presently out of earshot.

The seamen who stayed were Weatherwax, Luddy, Gouger, Wambold, and Sampson. I sent Wambold to his work in the galley, bidding him have a care not to forget the women's supper ; I then called Sampson aft to the wheel, and told the others to hold themselves in readiness for a sudden call. I next asked Alice Perry to pipe "All hands."

My ship's company, filled with excitement and wonder, rushed on to the poop. I believe some of the girls had a notion that I meant to sail the ship straight away to Australia, and I saw a suspicion of that sort in the seamen, for the three of them went to the galley and talked to Wambold, and all of them watched us with six or eight of their pardners standing near.

But I had no other motive in summoning the girls than to request them to change into male attire, so as to have a good, useful working force fitly draped in case of emergency. The seamen saw what I meant when the girls came up clothed as lads, and went on to the forecastle with the pardners.

The after-part of the ship now looked full of men. Familiar as this feature of our ship-board life had long since grown—for ever since the worst of the Horn was over, I had gone on patiently and ploddingly training my female crew—I could not help laughing when I gazed around at the dressed-up women. If it hadn't been for their hair, they'd have appeared the completest sailors

you can imagine. Rather short, for the most part, it is true, but, in the main, as broad-shouldered, stout, and vigorous as any lads I was ever shipmates with, and most of them, in their male duds, spite of their hair, looking much more like young men than young women.

I was talking to Kate, when Alice Perry, in her man's clothes, rolled up to me. Her coarse beauty was wonderfully heightened by her dress. She of them all looked the character of handsome, mutinous, dare-devil young sea-dog the best. She drew close with a flashing glance towards the helmsman, and said, in a sharp whisper—

“Capt'n, why's the ship standing still?”

“Don't you know I'm waiting for those men to return?”

“That's just it, then!” she snapped. “What d'yer want with 'em? They've served us beastly bad, haven't they? I'd like to dish that Cobbs, too—she and the rest.”

“Mind how you talk!” said I, looking into her eyes, which, though sometimes as

cold as a cat's, were now on fire with temper, with an angry cat's expression in them too.

"Here's thirty of us, and you're a man, and the rest of the girls'll help," said she. "Lock up the sailors that's left, and sail away."

"No," I answered, frowning at her.

"Yer always agin what I ask."

I grasped her by the arm. "If the sailors overhear you, they'll drown you."

We stared at each other, and then she gave me one of her wild, glaring grins, wheeling round immediately afterwards, and trying to whistle as she walked away.

"There's the soul of a pirate in that figure," said Kate, looking after her.

"Whoever bore her mulled her sex," I exclaimed.

"She's so much in love with you," said Kate, "she'd kill you for jealousy, if you provoked her."

"Then I'm a dead man," I answered.

She did not ask me to explain myself.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SAILORS DECIDE.

WHILST Brigstock was on shore, I stood out to improve my offing. My crew of women filled on the topsail, braced up, hauled taut to windward, and coiled down as smartly as any fore-castle company. When I had increased the distance by about half a mile, the girls backed the yards again. The fellow at the helm steered with a face of admiration whilst this was doing. Two others were in the chains, swinging the lead; the remaining two would have pulled with the women, but the girls told them to get out of the way, and they held aloof, looking on, grinning like thirsty spaniels.

I constantly swept the island with the telescope, but the vegetation was wonder-

fully thick and rich, and when Brigstock's boat had entered one of the green, shady creeks, I saw no more of the men. Sometimes I'd strain my ear, fancying I caught a sound of firearms. Imagination was lively, and I'd see a movement down in the vegetation near the shore, as of something creeping, and black with a greasy gleam. But the glass resolved me nothing save bushes and tall grasses and trees, when I directed it at the spot.

About seven o'clock I came on deck after making some supper, and saw the boat. My heart beat hard at the sight of her. It was a scene of tender, spacious, indeed glorious beauty, just then; for the sun was burning behind the island, and the mass of the land stood out in dyes deepened to a heart-melting loveliness by the splendour of their setting, and the sky-line ran in feathers of palm and cocoa, till it was smoothed out, by distance or altitude, into the dark-green polished round of the hill. The western light sank so deep into the evening shadow that the distance of the illimitable night

eastwards seemed to open, and the ocean streamed in ripples of gilt into it.

All the while, saving a short interval for supper, the women thronged the bulwarks and forecastle, feasting their eyes on that delicious restful scene of land. It was pitiful to mark the yearning devouring looks of many of them, the heart-craving for a run ashore, a roll in the grass, for a handful of sweet cool fruit that should luxuriously sink through and through to the marrow, for a drink from one of the bright falls shining afar.

The boat came along leisurely ; the pardners screamed a welcome when she was within ear-shot, and the rowers looked round and nodded, but they pulled like men dead beat. The first to come over the side was Brigstock ; Miss Cobbs darted from under the break of the poop to meet him, and they stood together talking for some moments very earnestly, he holding her by both hands.

I composed my face, but my heart beat hard with anxiety whilst I walked the poop,

waiting for Brigstock. He arrived presently, moving very slowly.

"Well?" said I.

"It's a beautiful island, capt'n."

"Will it suit you?"

"We believe it will, sir."

"Believe!"

"We're all agreed it'll answer," said he, raising his voice that the man at the wheel, who was straining his ear, might hear him.

"But," he continued, talking as much at that worthy (Weatherwax) as at me, "afore we decide, our pardners must view it."

"That's but right."

He then described the island, but his description scarcely went further than Bull's. He said there was a fine lagoon round the point, where, should they agree to occupy the place, the ship would lie snug and safe as in harbour whilst they took what they wanted out of her.

"I'll accept no risk of that sort," said I. "What! Enter a lagoon with a ship drawing eighteen feet, without a pilot, or a chart of soundings! And more than a hundred



souls to occupy that island till something comes along, should we touch and stick, and go to pieces all in due course! No lagoon for me. We'll work in close inshore; you've plenty of good landing-places."

"Well," said he, with a smothered yawn, "we'll not let that be a difficulty, sir."

I stepped to the side to see what they were doing in the boat, and found them handing up a quantity of cocoanuts and plantains to the women. Brigstock sung out for fruit for the captain. I observed that only the pardners were to be regaled, and asked for a few nuts and clusters as a treat for some of my own people. Then, as the dark was drawing down, I ordered the boat to be hoisted, and my crew of girls braced the topsail-yard to the wind.

There was nothing for it but to stand on and off throughout the night, and keep a bright look-out for reefs. Fortunately the moon gave a clear light, and robed the island in a mist of silver, which shone faintly upon the sea, so that we could never lose sight of the land. All this night long I was up

and down. The women kept the decks till eleven, and some of the partners were talking to the seamen down in the waist where the moonlight lay bright after eight bells had been struck.

Dawn found us off the island again, and soon after sunrise the ship was full of life. It was just such weather as had shone yesterday, with the same warm gushing of wind, only weaker. The men got breakfast early, doing nothing to the ship save laying the topsail to the mast. The women were at breakfast in the 'tweendecks when the crew cleaned out the long-boat, and hoisted her over the side.

There was a big party of them to go ashore, and they needed a boat of some burthen.

Brigstock conversed with me on the poop whilst the men were at this job. He told me there were no signs of life on the island. They had looked about them carefully, and discovered nothing to tell that the spot had been inhabited at any period. He said if he took possession in the name of Queen

Victoria, would it belong to England or to him and his party as its settlers?

I answered if they settled the island, Great Britain was not likely to dispossess them. If they flourished, they'd call themselves a dependency, and England would send out help to enable them to fight with their enemies should they be attacked.

"We shan't want no help," said he, "for we don't hintend no fighting. Who's agoing to attack us? 'There's some custom in taking possession—can yer name it, sir?"

"Hoist the British flag, and say, 'I take possession in the queen's name,' and then call for three cheers."

"Suppose it's been already took possession of by the French?"

"They may attempt to turn you out; you appeal to your native country; you become the subject of a long diplomatic correspondence, and perhaps the occasion of a war, and the name of Brigstock passes into tradition not only as a father of South Sea settlements, but a creator of history."

He relished all this with one of his slow

smiles, and after eyeing the island for awhile, stepped to the rail to see what they were at in the boat.

Observing Alice Perry on the quarter-deck, I bade her pipe, "All hands shift clothes." One of twenty women overhanging the bulwark rail called up to me—

"Capt'n, mayn't we go on shore for a treat?"

I shook my head.

"Why not?" cried Emma Marks.

I answered with a scowl and turned my back. Gladly would I have sent the poor women ashore for a run for the day, to eat the sweet tropical fruit, and refresh themselves at the cold bright springs, and forget their dreary habitation of 'tweendecks in the twinkling shadows of the rich woods. But who was to put them ashore and bring them off and be responsible for their safety when landed?

Not until ten o'clock did the long-boat get away. There went in her eleven men and all the chosen females. Bull and Jackson remained in the ship.

I found something incredible in the sight of the respectable, sausage-curved Miss Cobbs, attired as though she was going on a visit to friends, descending the gangway-ladder the men had thrown over, with her countenance defined in lines of self-complacency and demure importance under her bonnet. The looks of the others, such as Kate Davis and the two Honeyballs, rendered realization of this settling scheme easy; but Miss Cobbs!

Brigstock handed her down, and seated her in the stern-sheets; the men and women made a big boatful as they shoved off, hoisting the sail, laughing and chatting like a party on pleasure, looking up at the faces along the bulwark rail, and nodding, and answering shrill calls to them not to forget to return with plenty of cocoanuts and plantains.

Whilst the boat was going ashore, I observed Perry and three or four others in earnest conversation. All my girl-company, male-attired, were on the poop. Perry and the girl she talked with came and asked me

to proceed on the voyage. I pointed to the long-boat and said, "And leave those people?"

"Yes," cried Alice, passionately.

"We had enough of this yesterday, my girl," said I.

Her face darkened, and she exclaimed, "Why are we to be kept waiting? What's those beasts there done that *they're* to keep us messing about here whilst they goes ashore and enjoys themselves?"

"Lord, if I was but a man!" exclaimed Emmy Read, with a grin of temper that exhibited a mouthful of teeth, not so white and glaring as Perry's, though.

"For two pins," said Alice, "we'd lock yer up and sail away with the ship just to spite 'em. Ah, that we would," she cried, with a saucy red flashing toss of her head, "if we knew which way to steer!"

"Would you?" said I. "Would you?"

And putting my arm coaxingly and caressingly through hers, I looked her in the eyes, and led her away from her companions, and then, in lover-like accents, told

her to keep her temper, and to suffer me to have my way; the mutiny in her spirit softened out of her gaze; she liked my caressing manner, and was presently purring to it after her style.

I observed that Kate watched us.

The boat, I have said, got away at ten, and did not return until seven. I guessed they were enjoying a fine holiday ashore. They had plenty of fruit to eat, and water to drink, and a delicious little scene of country to ramble in. Three times my girls trimmed sail for a "ratch," as we term it, by which means I kept a safe offing. I often looked through the glass, but never could see a sign of the Brigstock party.

I'll not enlarge upon the incidents of that day. Alice Perry gave me no more trouble, but that blister of a female, Emma Marks, came very near to causing confusion by rushing on to the poop and calling upon my crew to lower the remaining boats without regard to my orders, so that parties might go ashore.

"I can pull an oar," she squeaked.

“There’s Corbin there can row, and Hann Wright, and Fanny Pike.”

How did my heart ache she was no man, that I might have gripped her by breech and scruff and flung her over the poop rail!

Thus all day, with a brief break of three boards for an offing, did the *Earl of Leicester* lie, softly breathing rather than rolling with the light delicate pulse of swell out of the north, and her sails slightly fanning as she swayed, and the sky cloudless from sea-line to sea-line.

In the afternoon Kate told me that whilst the women were at dinner she overheard some of them say they meant to ask Brigstock to let them join the settlers on the island. I had all along reckoned from the moment when the whole beauty of this little Pacific Eden was revealed to us that many would yield to its witchery; those particularly who were orphans and, perhaps, utterly friendless in England, with but vague ideas and lean hopes when they thought of Australia and of work and wages there.



At about seven o'clock in the evening, when the sunset was splendid behind the island, I saw the long-boat creep, a black spot, with the wink of oars on either hand, out of the creek it had vanished in. She came along briskly, and was speedily alongside. The girls stepped on board very merry, browned, somewhat bedraggled as though with horseplay and caper-cutting in the woods. They brought a good cargo of nuts and plantains, which were freely distributed. Miss Cobbs alone looked as though she had sat still and watched the others; her attire was as neat as when she left. Brigstock maddened me with impatience by lingering in the boat. I was burning with curiosity to know the decision the party had arrived at, and, unable to bear myself any longer, called to Miss Cobbs, who stood chatting in the gangway with several of the women. She came promptly, smirking as usual, but dropped me no curtsy.

“Well, Miss Cobbs,” said I, “what do you and the others think of the island?”

“Captain Morgan, it is simply lovely,” she

replied, with an air of superiority. "Oh, what flowers! The 'ole place smells like a nosegay," she exclaimed, bringing her fingers together, and rolling up her eyes.

"Do you mean to settle upon it?"

"We do, indeed, and on no other. Only think," she said, extending her hand towards the land, "of natur', as Mr. Brigstock says, endowing us poor people with such a beautiful estate! It's nigh as big as a county, sir, and to be had for the taking. No wild beasts—sweeter birds than ever you could dream of—such beautiful waterfalls, too!—a natural 'arbour, and on the other side past the 'ill, a long row of caves, clean and airy living-rooms till houses can be contrived, and then most useful by-and-by, as Mr. Brigstock was saying, as bonded warehouses."

I let her run on; indeed, her tongue's sharp edge had cut so great a weight of anxiety from my spirits, that my heart could not have beaten a gayer measure had yonder island been Sydney Heads, and our ship, with a pilot aboard, entering the bay.

Brigstock now coming up, I said to him, "So that island proves to your liking?"

"It's a Heden," he answered.

"There's a hundred gentlemen's estates in it," said Miss Cobbs, "and all beautifuller than the beautifullest in England."

"Nothen'll be wanted," said Brigstock, "but homes."

"You'll not keep the ship hanging off here longer than's necessary, I hope? We've had two days of it; the weather favours us, but there may come a change," said I, looking eastwards, where I thought I saw an orange flake of sail in the shadow. But it melted soon, and was nothing.

"We'll be tarning to first thing in the morning," said he. "Will the boat lie safe? Bit of a job chocking and gettin' her over agin."

We settled to tow her, as I meant to keep under way all night, as before. We had some further conversation about the island. Brigstock and Cobbs then left me; and I got my girl-crew to trim sail whilst the men saw to the long-boat.

It was then nearly dark, the moon not yet risen, and a gaping crimson scar of sunset past the island, that made me think somehow—as though I was gone mad—of the red mouth of a yawning black cat. But all was starry, balmy, and serene. Throughout the day the barometer had warranted the weather, and now came a third passage of ocean night-beauty, the firmament hovering in trembling prisms over our mastheads, the sea stretching flat in liquid black east and west, sparkling here and there where some larger ripple broke.

Whilst my crew were below changing, and at the moment that the green dawn in the east was whitening into dim silver over a red arch of moon upon the black sea-line, the Brigstock party, who had gathered together on the fore-castle, struck up a hymn. All of the “settlers” were there, save Harding, who watched the ship, and Coffin at the wheel. They sang with strength, spirit, and something of sweetness; it was a familiar hymn, and many on the main-deck joined in. That song of adoration thus sang by shapes

of shadow forward, or standing near the main-hatch and elsewhere, with the silence in the faint white hollow sails climbing to the black line of the royal yard, gave a wonderful solemnity to the rising of the moon.

When the hymn was ended, I heard Brigstock's deep, rolling voice; he was either lecturing his people or praying. Presently they sang a second hymn. Just then I spied Kate, standing in the moonlight at the gangway. I called her to me, and told her that the people had decided to settle that island yonder; in a few days we should be heading for Australia; in a month, under God, we should have arrived at Sydney! Never had my spirits danced so in all my years! Had they sung anything but hymns, I should have capered to the music.

Whilst I walked, talking with great excitement to this girl—think of our teeming topics! the island scheme, the passage to Sydney with girls for a crew, the *afterwards*—a tall, stoutly built woman, named Sarah Thomas, came along the poop and stopped us.

"Capt'n, may I have a word?"

"What is it?"

"D'yer think the notion of living upon that there island," said she, pointing to the black mass of it on the quarter, "is worth entertaining?"

"By whom?"

"By me and some others."

"They don't want you."

"Why not?" she exclaimed, with some heat. "We wouldn't meddle with them. We'd be a separate establishment. They ain't got no right to *all* the island. We'd choose bits of ground in a separate part; the men 'ud build 'omes for us, and in return we'd wash for them, wait upon 'em, clean, and do their herrants. A plenty we could do," she added, suspiciously, as though afraid of my laughter.

Laugh I did, nevertheless, and, to get rid of her, bade her go to Brigstock. She went away muttering sulkily, and at the head of the ladder called to others below, aggressively, "He says they don't want us. As if bein' single, we wasn't of use. They can't take it

*all*, I swear, not lawfully. Who's them sailors, to grant *rights*?" and thus calling, she sank down the ladder and vanished.

We were off the island again in our former position before daybreak. The sight was beautiful, when the rising sunshine streamed upon the land. The dyes shone out in silver, green, and gilt, in the steady gleam of ivory, the flashful throb of foam upon the beach, in lines of delicate, lace-like vapour, motionless upon the hillside. Yet, captivating as was the picture, would not some of the people hang back at the last?

The long-boat was brought to the gangway, and all three remaining boats lowered; this was done at daylight. The hatches were then opened, and the men went to work to break out the goods they meant to take. The bales of clothes were easily come at, and before breakfast they had loaded the gig with bundles of attire, male and female. Such bountiful appropriation was nothing short of piracy; for lighter offences than bagging those bundles, Brigstock and his party would have been turned off at

Execution Dock, and elsewhere, in days when the youngest of them were sucklings. I could not reconcile so very downright a robbery with the excellent principles professed by Brigstock. There went, I dare say, the value of the men's pay down to this time in the gig's lading alone. But I resolved to hold my peace. So far as *I* was concerned, they might gut the ship, if they left me the wherewithal to carry her to Sydney.

After breakfast they started again, and got a whip to the winch to sway some of the heavy things out of the hold. I begged Brigstock to break out in such fashion as to give the ship no list, for the women would be unable to trim her ; he promised to see to it. He also consented, if the weather permitted, to raft some casks ashore, and fill them with fresh water, when they were done with their own business.

As I have elsewhere said, the ship's lading consisted largely of agricultural implements ; but the catalogue of commodities also comprised many articles always needed by young settlements, particularly districts distant from



a cargo-fed source, such as Sydney. Brigstock, no doubt, before I was stolen out of the *Caroline*, had acquainted himself with the character of the *Earl of Leicester's* freight. It was this, perhaps, that set his colonizing scheme going. Anyway, down in our ship's hold, was nearly all that a gang of settlers would need. Figure the contents of a large ironmonger's shop; then add a ready-made tailor's establishment; enlarge with a quantity of ploughshares, rakes, hoes, pickaxes, and so forth. There were bales of coarse blankets in the forehold, and, which was of great consequence to the Brigstock party, a considerable stock of household stuff, such as small, square looking-glasses, cheap crockery in crates, folding chairs and bedsteads.

They had four boats, and all were filled by noon, so that, after getting some dinner and smoking a pipe, they were able to start right away for the island. The long-boat, with hoisted sail, took the other boats in tow. Brigstock was in charge, and went with eight men, leaving Harding and two others behind. There was a pleasant little inshore

breeze, and as we lay hove-to, within a mile of the shore, the boats soon vanished in the green and shady creek the men had headed for on previous occasions. They were absent two hours, then returned, rowing. My girl-crew trimmed sail for a board, whilst the men went below into the hold, and I "reached" to an offing outside of a mile, which our drift was bound to narrow before the crew were ready with the second cargo.

All this while the weather continued splendid and quiet, for which my heart beat in gratitude every time I looked round the sea; for I was already bitterly sick of this business of loitering. I was feverishly eager for the start; the more so, because of that sort of nervousness that makes you crazy to end a difficulty. Is it a tooth or an arm? in the name of the angels, quick! that it may be over! Before me lay the task of sailing the ship for a month, and perhaps longer, through perilous waters, with only women to work the vessel, and myself the sole navigator. You'll suppose I wished it bedtime, and all well.

They went away with a second cargo of four boatfuls in the afternoon, two hours before sundown. All the pardners helped at the winch, and were busy wherever they could be useful. I kept my own girls, dressed in male attire, on the poop, which diminished the main-deck crowd, but there were nearly fifty others to hang about, to get in the way of the men, to pass remarks, to strive, in short, to breed trouble.

The worst of these was not Emma Marks, as I might have expected, but that stout, strong female, Sarah Thomas, who with others wanted to go ashore with the Brigstock party. I learnt from Kate, that Thomas had spoken to Brigstock, and that he had sternly refused to take any other than the men's own women. Hot words had followed, and, in revenge, a mob of the girls who wished to settle, Thomas acting as ringleader, went about the deck, calling insolent remarks down to the sailors in the boats, or in the hold, whenever they caught sight of them, mocking and sneering at the pardners, and making themselves offensive in that sort of way in

which people of their condition are usually artists. The men took but little notice of them. Now and then you'd hear a deep growl of "Stow that ballyrag!" or a cry, faint in the depths, of "Hold your blather, you trulls!" "Dry up, you faggots!"

Once Brigstock faced Sarah Thomas, and in deep, warning notes asked her if she thought such behaviour "was agoing to bring her a hinvitation to jine the island party? I'd rather land a boatful of rats than two such as you," said he. "Yer should marry a militiaman; dorn't hentertain no notion of 'spectable sailors. Jer stare arter yer drink? Then you're drunk now. My opinion is," he exclaimed, looking round, "that this here Thomas is one of them parties as picks up their knowledge of life by putting their heye to the neck of a whisky-bottle, and using it as a telescope." He nodded severely at her, and amid a little squeal of laughter from some of the partners, went over the side into one of the boats there.

The surprising part was the enthusiasm of the women who were to take up their abode

on the island with the seamen. They kept together, and throughout the day laughed, and talked, and sang, bustling about in a gang to help the men, all with faces glowing with holiday pleasure and happy expectation. I never witnessed the least suggestion in them of hanging back. You'd see them staring at the island as at something newly given to them—as a man, after he's bought a house, looks at it, and walks on t'other side the street to see it, though he may have lived in it for years. My notion had been, the recoil in them would have been fatal to Brigstock's scheme, when a day of staring had staled the island as a picture, and when they noticed how blank was the circle of sea, how lonely that spot of land in the midst of it, nothing alive moving upon its white beach, no feathering of smoke anywhere to indicate human existence. But in truth, imagination in those poor, rude, homely souls, stopped at perception that yonder was a piece of country which they were at liberty to divide amongst them, where every woman would have a husband, where they'd build

houses and plant gardens, and lounge their lives away, wiping out of memory all the unpleasant parts—the severe mistresses, the month's notice, the bad “character.”

Another night drew down: a night of moonlight and silence upon the sea; the soft wind blew, the stars trembled in their hosts. Again the Brigstock party sang hymns upon the forecastle till nine o'clock, and till eleven sat talking there. Most of the women went to bed early; they were sick of this detention, weary of the sight of land they were not permitted to visit, and many were sulky and gloomy with envy.

By noon, however, next day, the men had carried ashore all they proposed to take, including a raft of spare booms, and a couple of ensigns. Hospitably had the hold served them! Two boats they loaded with provisions, chiefly tinned goods; which sight so alarmed me that I went below before they put off, to ascertain what supplies they intended to leave us. There was not plenty, indeed; but I reckoned there would be enough, unless we should be sorely put to it

by head-winds or foul weather. Of beef and pork they took as much as the gig could swim with. This was to be their last load, and with a whole squadron of spare booms in tow, and three boats laden down to the gun-wales, away they went in the long-boat, raising a mighty cheering, which was answered in a hundred shrill cries by their partners, who waved hats, shawls, hands in a most impassioned, grotesque exhibition of encouragement and Wapping-like devotion.

Brigstock had kept his word, and left the ship on a level keel. Basing my calculations on the burthen of the long-boat and the other three boats, I reckoned they had taken about fifty tons of goods.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE START FOR SYDNEY.

ON the morning of the fifth day, dating from our arrival off the island, we were heading in for it once more to heave-to for the last time, that the Brigstock party might go ashore. We towed the long-boat in our wake. Everything had been completed before dark on the previous night, when, with the help of my women-crew at the winch, we had hoisted aboard a number of casks filled with fresh water for us by Brigstock and his men, and rafted off in tow of the boats.

The wind had shifted. It was blowing south, a merry whistling wind, cool and refreshing; the ocean was a wide dance of diamonds under the sun, and the life of little



white clouds swarming briskly northwards was in the sky. It was about half-past nine in the morning; I stood in conversation with Brigstock at the break of the poop. All my crew, dressed in male attire, were scattered about the decks, mingling and conversing with the rest of the females. The chests and boxes belonging to the settlers had been taken ashore on the previous day, together with half a suit of canvas, to supply the people with roofs until they had built houses. The ship's bell was also gone; likewise the clock, and many other conveniences and necessities. The whole group of sailors and pardners, barring one at the helm and Brigstock, were on the forecastle, attired ready for the shore. The women had put on their best things; even in this trifling particular they showed an incapacity of distinguishing that touched me.

Brigstock was dressed as parsonically as his clothes would admit of. He had found a white shawl, and had buttoned himself up to it. His head-cover was a slopblack wideawake—but the fellow's best claims in

this way lay in his face, which this morning, as we drove slowly towards the island under a maintopgallant-sail, was unusually long, yellow, and complacent—his dark eyes dwelt steadfastly and thoughtfully upon the island, and often a slow smile of deep and serious gratification, breaking out at his mouth, overran his face and disappeared at his eyebrows.

“Capt’n,” said he, turning to me after a long pause in our talk, “the time for saying good-bye has pretty nigh come.”

“Yes, it’s close at hand,” said I.

“I hope we’re forgiven the wrong we done yer?”

“You and your men have atoned fully and handsomely. The behaviour of the seamen will remain one of the most memorable of my life experiences. Well for the red flag if there were more influences of your sort in our forecastles.”

He sunk his head in a solemn gesture of thanks, and said, “As our oath has been kept by us, so you’ll keep yourn, sir.”

“Undoubtedly.”

“It’ll take us some time to settle down,

and we dorn't want to be broke up just when we've got comfortable."

"You'll not be broken up through me."

"We shall hoist the flag arter we've got a spar set up, and then take possession. There's a beautiful valley t'other side past that hill there; that's where we mean to build! It's convenient for the lagoon, which we'll make a road ter in due course."

"Your first act, I suppose, will be to marry yourselves?"

"I'll see to that," he answered with a stiff, severe air, as if he would have no levity in that direction.

"Who'll marry you to Miss Cobbs?"

"The party I delegates; him as I empowers by my rights as president helect," he answered fluently, as though the subject had been long ago argued and settled.

"It's an heroic undertaking," said I, looking at the island that was fast broadening and deepening into proportion and beauty, though frightful for loneliness, to *my* mind, figuring it as I did on the chart, and thinking of the leagues and leagues the sea went

away from it on all hands ere washing the land of white men and the civilization of Australia and South America. "How shall one get to hear whether you flourish or not?"

"Ah!" said he, "there can't be no noose-papers with us for yet a bit. But it's a home, and a beautiful one—as much land as is in a hundred gentleman's seats, as Miss Cobbs truly says, only finer, cultivated by the fust of all gardeners, Natur'; such a home as I dorn't wonder makes many of them poor women down there wild to share—but it couldn't be. There'd be nothen but rows. Let 'em get pardners, and larn civility, and they'll be welcome to jine us—if they can find us," he added, with a dry askew glance at me.

Thus we conversed; I saw Miss Cobbs talking with Kate Darnley in the waist—the minutes slipped by, the ship drove along over smooth water, the long Pacific swell helping her.

"We're close in enough, I think," said I, presently. A fit of nervousness took me suddenly, and my heart beat quick. "Back

the maintopsail-yard!" I bawled. "Port main-brace!"

The girls, full of zeal, eagerness, expectation, rushed aft to where the ropes led.

"For the last time, sweethearts," cried Alice Perry, in a voice merry as music with the emotions of that hour; she struck up one of the many sailor songs she and the rest knew, and the girls pulled with a will and a chorus. The topsail came aback; the ship lost way.

"Are we all ready?" shouted Brigstock.

His party answered by coming quickly from the forecandle and gathering about the gangway.

"Corbin, take the wheel," said I.

She replaced Jackson, who came along smiling and said, when close to me, "Is it to be good-bye here, sir?"

"If you please, my man," said I.

"Then good-bye and God bless ye," said he, extending his hand, "and may you have a prosperous voyage to Sydney, and do as well by our stealing of you as you fared ill by our misunderstanding of yer."

I shook his hand, and he left the poop.

They lowered the quarter-boat they meant to take and keep, brought the long-boat to the gangway, and got the steps over. Brigstock stood with his hands upon the brass rail of the poop-break, looking around and along the ship as though to make sure he'd forgotten nothing. He turned to me in a minute or two and said—

“Is there nothen we can do for you, capt'n, afore we go?”

“Nothing.”

“The anchors are at the catheads,” said he; “all's ready with your ground-tackle. But how about your canvas, sir?” he continued, rolling up his eyes at the sails. “Would yer like us to leave you snugger? None of the gells I expect'll be able to handle them main and fore tor's'ls.”

I told him I meant to keep the vessel under the shortened canvas she now carried; should it come on to blow, I'd lower the yards, haul out the reef-tackles, and leave the rest to the gods. I said I looked for fine weather. If I wanted help, I'd shift my helm for it; it

could never be far off in this ocean of islands and whalers.

He looked at me with a dull admiration in his slow gaze, then going to the rail and observing the boats were ready, this formal, solemn, mid-century reproduction of the famous mutineer Christian, returned and said—

“Capt’n, we’re ready to go.”

“I’ll bid you all good-bye at the gangway,” said I, and went on to the quarter-deck.

The women crowded about the settlers, as I call them, and stared at the sailors and girls as though they had been strangers, just come over the side. The prevalent emotion was wonder; the looks of most of the females expressed it. They hardly spoke; the pardners, on the other hand, waiting for Brigstock, and perhaps for me, chatted briskly with the seamen.

When Brigstock joined them, they were twenty-six in all. I could not view them without feeling a little affected. Doubtless I refined upon their thoughts. There was nothing in their faces, in the notes of their

laughter and talk to infuse a melancholy into my contemplation of what lay before them. Then, again, in fruit and fish there was abundance to subsist on, though the island should remain unvisited for years. Still the association of shipboard life wrought in me; I could not behold those people thus departing, thus exiling themselves, my own countrymen and countrywomen, full of brave hopes and sturdy resolves, intrepid as any family that ever set sail from the shores of our native country to extend our dominion by perilous exploration and by labour hard, patient, and obscure; I say I could not view them without emotion, without being moved for a little to a degree that had nearly dimmed my eyes.

“Captain Morgan,” said Brigstock, taking off his hat and extending his hand, “farewell, and may God’s eye be upon yer, and upon all these people who have only you to look to, after the Almighty, for protection and safety!”

“Mr. Brigstock,” I answered, “from the bottom of my heart I wish you well. May



your settlement prosper, and may your name achieve the renown the heroic example you have set your followers entitles you to ! ”

I then shook hands with Miss Cobbs. *This* seemed to me the only unreal passage in the whole prosaic piece. Whilst I looked at her, I could not believe it possible that this highly respectable person with her sausage curls and prim attire was one, indeed the leader, of the women who were going ashore to live with thirteen seamen, first under canvas, then in bamboo houses. With one after another of the settlers, male and female, I shook hands. This was followed by some hand-shaking between the people who were going, and a few, but a few only, of the emigrants. The flourish of farewell being ended, the women were handed into the boats by the men, who followed them and then cast off, Brigstock steering the long-boat and sour Harding the quarter-boat.

I ran on to the poop, and Kate came after me, and together we stood looking. My girl-sailors lined the rail, and a crowd of women got on to the forecastle. I meant to watch

the boats vanish in the creek before trimming for Sydney. When they had gone about a cable's length, all the people stood up and cheered the ship loud and long; that large cry of farewell came to the ear edged with the female voices in it. I flourished my cap and roared back a cheer, and Kate waved her hand, and a few women forward flourished to the boats, but the greater mass of us were mute as death, and deadly was the chill of that silence upon the spirits, generous at the sight and warmed by the huzzaing of those departing men and women.

"It is a spiteful sex!" I burst out.

"They hate Cobbs," said Kate.

"For *such* kitchen trollops to sneer!" I exclaimed, savage with the silence of the women. "Cobbs or no Cobbs, there goes the making of a great nation in those boats."

She seemed to measure the island, then looked at me with a smile.

In the boats they continued to strain their eyes at the ship. The faces of the women all turned our way were white as paper. It was the one thrilling passage in these ex-

periences; the last sigh, as it were, in the death-scene; the pause of the gallows before the hangman draws his bolt; the flash ere the murderous missile strikes; a something soul-moving in the instant of its doing. I could not shift my eyes from the boats; they constrained me as by magic, and when at last they vanished in the creek I gave a sigh as though I had been sobbing, then came to myself on a sudden with desperate perception of my great responsibilities.

Needless to say, I had long before in these five days of waiting off the island explored the charts in the cabin, and settled upon the course to be steered, and I determined to start by heading due south till I should have struck the latitude of  $26^{\circ}$  or  $27^{\circ}$ ; then heading due west, I should have a wide field of clear Pacific before me, nothing to trouble about in the shape of land, providing I was not blown to the northwards, till we should have reached the longitude of  $175^{\circ}$ . We should then be within an easy sail of Sydney.

The moment the boats had disappeared, and I had come to myself, so to speak, I

stepped from the rail, and, looking round me, I shouted—

“Now, girls, hurrah for Sydney! Let’s get that maintopsail swung, and away we go!”

“Hurrah for Sydney!” echoed Alice Perry, springing into the air.

“Now to show what we’re made of,” cried Emmy Read.

“Brace round lively, my hearts!” I bawled.

The girls, perfectly disciplined by this time, as you’ll suppose, judging by the prodigious pains I had taken, fled without the least disorder to the several braces; and in a moment the poop was alive with bending and lifting figures, all pulling as rhythmically together as a pendulum swings, and the wind was gay with their girlish chanting of sailors’ songs.

There were thirty of them; not one had, so far, failed me. Long since they had become as accustomed to their garb as I to mine; all novelty had many weeks before passed out of *that* condition of their training;

it was as commonplace and familiar a detail of our everyday life as my shooting the sun or the getting of our meals.

We had soon trimmed sail; but the wind directly headed us, and fearful of reefs, if I stood to the westward, I kept the ship on the starboard tack, proposing a twenty-four hours' board so, if the wind held. It was about eleven o'clock when we started; the sail we had hove-to under was the sail I carried, nothing above a maintopgallant-sail, and the mainsail was furled.

When we had braced to the breeze, and the girls had coiled down, I went to the break of the poop and called to the women to assemble on the quarter-deck, and to my crew to gather about me. Susannah Corbin was at the wheel, handling the helm as artistically as any able seaman I ever sailed with. I waited whilst the women collected, and *now* it was that I realized the position I was in. I don't mean to say I had not all along clearly grasped the significance of my scheme to carry this ship to port with women only; all that it involved, every possibility

of successful, perilous, or tragic issue I had perceived and dwelt on over and over again ; but at this moment realization was rendered acute in a sense before impossible ; first, by the absence of the seamen, then by our being under way, by the sight of the crowds dependent upon me, by the emptiness of, by the silence in, that fore-castle yonder.

The women assembled on the quarter-deck ; my crew, as I call them, ranged themselves on either hand in divisions of port and star-board watches, for long ago they had been thus divided and regularly mustered. We were now, all told, seventy-seven souls ; that is, seventy-six women and one man.

“ I haven’t called you together to make a speech,” said I, after a pause. “ We’re bound to Sydney at last, and there’s not one of you but will do her dead best to help me to get there. My duty is to arrange for the discipline of the ship. I am captain, of course ; my chief mate is Alice Perry, with whom I couple Miss Kate Darnley ; they will keep a look-out together. My second mate is Miss Emmy Read, with whom I couple

Charlotte Brown. My crew know their duties ; they are fifteen in each watch, and after the fore-castle has been cleaned and made fit for their reception, they will occupy it, as being more convenient for quickly answering a call than the 'tweendecks. These arrangements, I hope, are to your satisfaction ? ”

A murmur of assent arose from amongst my crew ; the women on the quarter-deck made no sign, perhaps holding that this part of the discipline did not concern them.

“ The seven who can steer will do so by rotation ; Corbin starts, and the helmswomen will arrange amongst themselves how the succession shall run when the two hours' trick is up. And now,” said I, leaning over the rail, to address the females below, “ we shall want a cook and a cook's mate ; call it two cooks. There are many of you perfectly qualified for that situation. The two ladies who cook will have nothing else to do. I call for volunteers.”

Several hands were raised, and a number of women cried out together.

"Two only," said I.

"'Tain't an orfice to be jumped for," shouted Emma Marks. "What's there to cook?"

"Time we got a meal fit to eat," cried a woman.

"Who can make pies and currant puddens?" yelled another. "It's been salt pork and salt beef ever since 'ome."

"Settle it amongst yourselves," said I; "we shall want our dinner, and it's drawing on to twelve o'clock."

Kate, who stood in the crowd, proposed that those who desired to be cooks should draw for the post; after much wrangling, it was agreed that two women, whose names I forget, should take the galley work, and they went forward laughing and highly pleased.

"I shall want a steward. Who'll wait upon me?" said I.

A general shout followed this. The post of steward seemed even more coveted than that of cook.

"Let Miss Darnley 'tend on yer," called Emma Marks.



There was so much eagerness that I perceived it would be hopeless to wait for the women to agree. To end the difficulty, I fastened my eye upon Sarah Harvey, who, as you may remember, was a short, very strong hunchback, with a fierce squint and coarse red hair, of a countenance and shape that might have been fashioned after a design by Hogarth, and, pointing to her, I sung out—

“Miss Harvey, will you wait upon me in the cabin?”

She squinted with astonishment, suspecting a joke; the vulgar-minded laughed, and an alley laugh it was! I put on a stern face, and said—

“Harvey, will you or won’t you wait upon me in the cabin?”

“If you are in earnest, I will, and gladly,” she answered, colouring.

“Then you’re the steward. I’ll tell you your duties by-and-by.”

I spoke peremptorily, and my manner and face silenced the girls, some of whom might otherwise have diverted themselves at Sarah Harvey’s expense.

"Now, ladies," said I, "a situation's vacant by Miss Cobbs's withdrawal. We must have a matron. We must appoint a head who'll be responsible for the cleanliness of your quarters, contrive that your meals are punctually served, and act as referee in disputes. You recognize the necessity for such a head?"

Many answered, "Yes."

"Then," said I, "I leave it to you to choose the likeliest person amongst you. Whoever is kind and amiable and popular, let her be your choice."

There were no more posts for the women to fill; all other work would be mine. I told them I should be satisfied if they chose a head by sundown, and then, thanking them for their attendance, I called to Kate to come up and walk the deck on a look-out with Perry, and went forward.

I looked into the galley; the two women were waiting for provisions to cook. I put a few questions to them, and having satisfied myself that they understood the sea-equipment of this big emigrant caboose, I called

Sarah Harvey, told off four of the girls, and bade them accompany me; and with the assistance of these five women I sent forward out of the lazarette, pantry, and harness-cask all the supplies necessary to provide the women with a dinner.

The girls crowded round the galley to watch the two cooks at work. As I passed on my way to the fore-castle, I heard one say—

“Soak a biscuit with currants—it ’ud bake nicely.”

And another, “Try your ’and at a pie; whether beef or pork, mince it fine, mix with biscuit, the tinned meat’ll make gravy.” . . . I lost the rest.

I walked quickly into the fore-castle, feeling uneasy when the ship was out of my sight. This sea-parlour was a large interior, corresponding as a structure with the raised deck aft. It was a gloomy cave, but dry and clean, and sweet enough in smell; the front of it was blocked by the great windlass, and the shadow lay neavy under the break there; the chain cables were bent, and the lengths of massive rusty links arched serpent-like

sheer through the interior from the windlass barrel to the hawse-pipes. The forecastle was a little square, the sunshine streamed through it, and lay in a flood of light on the deck beneath. The sailors had made a clean sweep ; chests, bedding, clothes, and blankets—everything was gone. Nothing survived the Jacks' occupancy but the black bowl of a pipe in the midst of the sunshine, and an old sea-boot.

Two rows of bunks went on either hand into the eyes of the ship ; with these and the cabins to port and starboard outside, intended for the use of the ship's bo'sun, sailmaker, and carpenter, I calculated berthing room for twenty-two ; which was all I needed, since of the thirty girls, fifteen turn and turn about must be continually up and dressed, ready for a call.

I am entering into these minute particulars at the risk of fatiguing you, but this is a voyage memorable in sea-story ; I have never yet with my pen told the story, and now that I am upon it the whole seafaring world will wish to learn how I managed.

My present anxiety was to settle the discipline of the ship, that I might devote myself to the navigation of her. As I was walking aft, a number of women crossed the deck; they were amongst the most respectable of the people. One of them exclaimed—

“We wish Miss Darnley would take the post of matron. She’s our choice, if she’s willing.”

I thought a minute, and then considered the notion good.

“She shall be the matron,” said I; “but you must support her authority. The pudding is gritty with your Emma Marks and others, and I don’t want the job of biting to prove tooth-breaking to Miss Darnley.”

They all in several forms of expression promised to back her up. I then went on the poop, where she was standing beside Alice Perry. It startled me for a breath, used as I was to the sight, and accustomed as my mind was to the thought of it, to see that figure of a boy at the wheel, other figures of boys standing about the poop, and

that boyish figure alongside Kate. And not *that* only; but to feel that I was the only man in the ship!

Perry stood with her hand upon the main royal back-stay, looking to sea; she made a handsome sailorly lad. Had she but cropped her hair, you would have thought her the beau ideal of a young English seaman, with her cloth cap on the back of her head, her rough hair tossed upon her forehead, her eyes fixed as though she watched an object afar, the coarse beauty of her profile showing clear-cut against the sky, her glowing lips parted, her figure swaying on the long-drawn heave of the plank. Kate might have been her sweetheart; it was the masculine, vulgar beauty of the one that made her the manly figure she looked. The other was all refinement; you saw the lady in her the plainer for the face and bearing of her companion.

“Kate,” said I.

She turned and came to me.

“They want you to be matron.”

She made a face, and looked at the women on the main-deck.

“Take the post, dear.”

I had never called her that before. She coloured and stared, and said, “They won’t obey me.”

“The best of them will back you, and then there’s my authority.”

“What shall I have to do?”

I ran over Hannah Cobbs’s routine, dwelling strongly on the necessity of the airing of the bedding, of keeping the ’tweendecks well washed and sweet, and thoroughly ventilated.

“Think of sickness happening,” said I—“of a fever breaking out. They’re an illiterate, raw, slum-like lot in the mass, and need such a head as you.”

After a short chat to this effect, she consented, and left me to arrange for the messes, and to see that the people got their dinner.

“What’s the sign of a change of weather?” said Alice Perry, rolling up to me. There is a theatrical instinct and talent of impersonation in all women, and this girl, when dressed as a man, rolled in her walk,

as though she had used the sea all her life.

“A ring round the moon, clouds to windward, twenty things; but the sure sign’s the barometer.”

“I want to know what to look out for when I keep watch,” said she.

“Observe the ship’s course; see that the girl at the wheel holds her straight, or we shall be ashore. Keep awake. Be careful of *that* at night. Miss Darnley’s going to be matron. I’ll take her place, and be your partner in keeping watch.”

She smiled, and said, “I’m still *your* chief mate, ain’t I?”

“Oh yes.”

“I mean to keep this,” said she, swinging the silver whistle.

“So you shall,” said I, and left her to see how Susannah Corbin was doing at the wheel.

It was a fine, wide, brilliant day: a wonderful picture of little gilt clouds in the air rolling along with the wind in puffs, as though some vast globe of golden vapour had



burst into orbs or bulbs. I found the ship's course true to a hair.

"Well done," said I; "you're the girl to haul in the slack, eh, Susannah? You're the sort for the homeward bounder's tow-rope."

"Whoy," she answered with a laugh, "what 'ud father ha' thought if I couldn't steer a ship?"

I looked at the island. Already its features were sunk in shadow, and it hung like a long blue cloud upon the sea. Were the people there watching the gleaming shaft our canvas made upon the ocean? Had any of them already repented of their resolution? Why, thought I, I might figure them as pensively gazing at our distant sail, a melancholy, regretful crowd upon some hillside, when in reality they, at this very moment, may be making a jolly picnic holiday of the hours, sitting in a ring round a banquet of fruit and ship-dainties, talking and ogling, enjoying to the very heart of them the coolness of the fragrant shade, and the beauty and colour of the trees and wild plants, after their months

of salt pork and 'tweendecks; looking forward with gay hearts to encamping for the night, and to choosing on the morrow some fairy scene of estate for the building of houses and the digging of plantations.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A SECOND SUICIDE.

WE had run the island out of sight by four o'clock, at which hour I was noticing, with some uneasiness, a windy appearance in the sky, north-east. The breeze still blew out of the south—a pleasant sailing wind—but the canvas we were under was half as much as we could have expanded, and when, with the help of four of the girls, I hove the log—a machine my crew were perfectly acquainted with the use of—I found the speed six, when it might easily have been made nine.

About this hour a sail sprang up on the weather bow. I fetched the glass, and found she was heading directly for us. Anxiety was lying very heavy upon my spirits at

this time. The sight of that sail seemed almost like a heavenly injunction to me to obtain the assistance of men to work the ship. Resolution will swerve, though it keeps the onward path. I own my mind reeled to and fro whilst I looked at the distant sail. A crowd of women were about the galley-door, with Kate in the thick of them, seeing, as I took it, that the girls' supper was being got ready.

Alice Perry stood near me, her gaze fixed upon the approaching craft. I stared at her a minute, and then called her.

"You're one of the most sensible of all my girls," said I. "Give me your opinion."

"About what?" she answered, with a sudden brisk expression in her face; for now, when I had a word of kindness, sympathy, or confidence for this girl, she would colour and glow in cheeks and eyes, as though every pulse in her quickened its beat.

"Will you girls stick to your work?"

"Why shouldn't we?" she said. "It's light and jolly enough, and it ain't going to last long."

“Yonder comes a ship. A signal might bring two or three hands in her to help us along. What do you think?”

“What do I think?” she cried. “Why, that you don’t trust us.”

“I trust you all; but have you strength and will to hold out? There’s a month—there may be six weeks—before us.”

“Have we failed you once?”

“No.”

“Look at little Ellen Clark there at the wheel! Is there e’er a man in that ship out there agoing to do better? Is it that we haven’t the spirit? Then we *have*, one and all! Some may lose it by-and-by, but there’s others with plenty of courage ready to take their places. Oh, capt’n, why, what’s makin’ your heart low, all of a sudden, like this?”

She fixed her fiery eyes on me, and watched steadily. It was as though the strange, wild, coarse, handsome creature sought to stare her own burning spirit and temper out of her into me. I let her look, meeting her full, then smiled; but as I

smiled, she frowned till she looked haggishly fierce and malevolent.

"It's been understood from the beginning," she cried, "that us girls of your crew are to sail the ship to Sydney."

I felt a little afraid of her.

"S'elp me, God!" she exclaimed, "if I had your larnin' 'bout the sun and things, I'd take the ship off your 'ands, and save yer all the trouble. We don't want no men 'ere. We've had enough of that. If e'er a one comes, I and the rest will give up—and I don't know about that, either!" she cried out, in a voice that was beginning to attract the attention of the women within earshot. "What'll ha' bin the good of us pulling and hauling, learnin' to steer, running up them ladders, if we're to give up when everything's settled, and all's goin' along sweetly nice, because being a gentleman, you can't put your trust in pore girls of our class. If men *are* to come, fired if some of us don't make it too 'ot for them to be of use to yer!"

I put on a stern face, not choosing her to

suppose I could endure such talk and airs; but, secretly, I was never better pleased with anything than the spirit she was now showing. I feigned to look sullenly, as though I was offended, and then said—

“ Well, I hope all the rest of the girls will prove as heroic as you. I don’t like your speech, but I love your heart!” And, softening my eyes, I gave her a faint smile, that she might see how it stood between us, and walked away.

The ship was abreast of us in an hour. The breeze had freshened out of the south, and the heel of our vessel was lifting the leeward water, yellow as cream, to the chain-plate bolts, and spinning it in a giddy dazzle of eddies off the quarters into a fan-shaped wake, which glanced with the glare of snow astern, where the blue sea was brokenly tumbling abreast of the moist red face of the sinking sun.

The stranger was a big full-rigged ship, light as a cask, with painted ports and half her own height of green sheathing showing. The sallow colour of the Spaniard flew at

her peak. She was probably from around the Horn for the Philippines on a true Jack Spaniard course for those islands. My girls had never been taught to handle the signal-halliards, and I made no sign. I stood close beside the helm, keeping an anxious eye upon the little spectacled woman Clark, ready to instantly grasp the wheel if the need arose.

The two ships passed within easy speaking distance; we could distinguish the faces of the people on board her. A whole crowd of men filled her forecastle, and a number of people of both sexes surveyed us from the poop. Doubtless, they had no difficulty in guessing what *we* were; the heaps of women on our decks would explain our character. But what was an English female emigrant ship doing in these seas? and, Sancta Maria purissima! who the dickens were all those boys staring along the line of the poop-rail?

She yawed just before she came abreast, as though she would close us to see better. A man sprang into the mizzen-rigging and



yelled out; I silently flourished my hand. She was a squab, wall-sided, rude square-ended wagon, with stump topgallant-masts, but the sun cast a splendour upon her, and she went away clothed in beauty not her own.

I had snatched a good view of the fellows on her forecastle, and observed them to be of a hairy chocolate-coloured type, some of them negroes; many wore the sugar-loaf hat, and several were hardly clothed in shirt and breeches. The sight of them surprisingly reconciled me to my resolution; as though indeed that ship had been hove up to strengthen rather than stagger my scheme. All my old passion of dislike to the idea of loosing a strange crew of men among the girls came upon me afresh. I figured half a score of those Spaniards in my forecastle—I witnessed the thirsty roll of their eyes over the women—I imaged them coming together in a gang, just down there, in the shadow of the break of the forecastle, making their whispers tragically significant by side-looks aft, and a frequent caress of the sheath-

knife strapped to their hips; I thought of myself unarmed—alone——

“No, by thunder, Clark,” cried I to the astonished girl at the wheel, “Perry’s right; we’ll ‘keep all on’ as we are!”

When the Spanish vessel had diminished into a small square of faint crimson light right astern, with the dark sea ridging between and the line of the horizon faint and doubtful as mist in the west where the sky was barred with streaks, like gashes, of rusty blood-red light, the dark scud out of the south pouring through the dying radiance like so much smoke, the weight went out of the wind on a sudden, in a dead drop, and aloft the collapsed and startled sails beat out the thunder of twenty small guns, whilst in that strange pause the briskness left the surge, and it ran softly, with a sulky lift of sea to right and left that made one think of a sullen pout of preparation for a whipping.

I guessed what was to come, but whence I knew not; till a turn in the flight of the scud overhead gave me the news. It was

not yet eight o'clock ; Clark was still at the wheel.

“ Keep your helm as it is ! ” I cried to her, and shouted with all my lungs for Perry, Lewis, Brown, Corbin—any one of them, to lay aft to the lee wheel.

A girl came rushing up the poop-ladder with all her might ; it was brave little Susannah Corbin of Deal. I sprang on to the main-deck to let go the topgallant-halliards, bellowing like a bull to the girls to man the starboard braces and square the yards.

*This* was testing them ! And splendidly the sweethearts responded ! Many were in the fore-castle when my cry sounded ; Emmy Read and Charlotte Brown, as joint second mates, were on the poop when I jumped to the topgallant-halliards ; save these and Clark at the wheel, not five of the girls were on deck when I shouted for a second hand to the wheel. But scarcely were the echoes of my voice hushed when all the girls were running out of the fore-castle. I shouted instructions as they came ; one gang

fled to the fore, another to the after-braces, and ere the wind hit us I had trimmed sail to the flight of the scud, with the girls standing quiet and breathing hard at the braces, ready for further hauling in a moment.

It was a shift of wind, neither sudden nor immediately violent, into the north-east; and when the first slap of it was in our canvas I shifted the helm for a dead-on-end run, satisfied to hold a south-west course till noon next day. Before a couple of hours had passed, it had hardened from a royal breeze into a blow that must have double reefed the topsails of a ship on a bowline. But we were rolling dead before it, with our topgallant-yard hoisted afresh, and it was inexpressibly comforting to think, not only that this wind was rushing us onwards towards Sydney at nine or ten knots in the hour, but that it would need to breeze up as hard again to reduce me to the only reefing shift it had ever been in my power to contemplate; I mean lowering the top-sail-yards on to the caps, hauling out the

reef-tackles, and taking my chance of the rest.

My chief anxiety was land or shoals—some low ragged line of island leaping right ahead into the windy moonshine, or, worse still, a little tract of boiling reef, invisible till right under the jibboom end. There was a good binocular glass in the captain's berth, and again and again I took it on to the forecandle, and stared into the confused blending of moonshine and flying vapour, and haze of wind, till my eyes reeled and my brain was sick.

Another huge anxiety of mine, too, on this our first night of windy weather, was the helm; it takes a practised hand to steer a running ship; we had a following sea now, and the ship's head fell off and came to as the surge underran her, rolling in snow to the bows, and racing aft again in shattered white water like an avalanche down a mountain steep. But, credit me or not as you will, the girls as they replaced one another at the helm in couples—Perry and Brown, then Lewis and Hale, then Clark

and Barker, then Corbin with Perry again—for an hour's spell at a time was as long as their strength was equal to—these spirited, heroic, fearless creatures, dressed as men, and acting like men, revolved the spokes with a judgment that held me dumb, meeting her, easing her, keeping her nose at the mean of the swing of the points at the lubber's mark, with such coolness and skill and alertness; there is no measure for my admiration whilst I recall them.

At nine o'clock I sent for Kate, and told her to get all the women below, out of the way of my girls, who might easily be thrown into confusion in the darkness, should the decks be crowded. The women went to their quarters very obediently; the sudden wild weather frightened them; they were subdued and rendered the more tractable, too, by a sort of wondering admiration of the behaviour of the girls of my crew. Shortly before ten Kate reported that all was right in the 'tweendecks. As Sarah Harvey had turned in, I asked Kate to get some wine out of the pantry, and fill the swing trays

with refreshments for my crew during the night; this she did, also going into the fore-castle to see that all was safe with the lamp there; I then told her to go below to bed, and we bade each other good night.

It frequently rained in brief black squalls, which burst in guns over the quarter and flashed in hissing shrieks into our whole top-sails, straining them and the topgallant-sail till they roared; and then the ship piled the water under her bows as high as the sprit-sail-yard. But these spasms of weather were soon over; the moon shone green and clear after ten, shearing through the scud, which she whitened till the heavens round about her seemed filled with flying steam.

I kept the starboard watch of girls on deck; the others I sent into the fore-castle for rest and shelter. Even of those who remained, two-thirds I despatched into the cuddy, there to sit and refresh themselves. At times, in some moon-bright interval, when the wind swept steadily, and when all the ship needed was an amidship helm, with a keen eye upon the illuminated compass-

card and an occasional play of spoke to hold the mean of the oscillation true, I'd step below to say a cheery word to the women, and keep them awake, and see to them. The lamp burnt brightly; the cuddy looked hospitable and brilliant; it was strange to see eight or ten girls dressed as men sitting at the table munching biscuit and beef and drinking the thin red wine, of which Kate had put three or four bottles on the swing-trays.

Once, on looking into the cuddy, I found Mary Barker leaning against the side asleep, with her head on Alice Perry's shoulder. A sudden movement of Perry awoke her; she started, and began to talk betwixt dreaming and waking—

“All right; I'm awake. Has the cook gone downstairs?”

A shriek of laughter awoke her thoroughly.

“Lor’,” she cried, “I thought I was at Mrs. Perkins's!”

“It'll be midnight soon, and then you'll sleep till four,” said I.

“We'll stop awake all night if you wish us to,” said one of the girls.



"It's better than nursing, anyway," said another. "I'd rather be a sailor than a sick-nurse."

"Or sleep with a baby," said one of them.

"Capt'n," cried Alice, "you're looking hollow; why don't yer sleep? I'll take any oath you like to call you if you're wanted."

I shook my head, and returned on deck.

There was to be no rest for me that night. At twelve the girls who lay in the forecastle came out, and the others who had been on the watch went to their bunks, lying down in their clothes. Most of these women of the port watch I sent into the cuddy for shelter and refreshments, as in the case of the others. In fact, I kept but two on deck (besides the girls at the wheel), and contrived to shelter them by seating them in the companion-way, with the hood up and one door shut.

Throughout the hours I stood beside the wheel, seldom leaving it lest the nerves or muscles of the two plucky creatures who steered should fail them, when, of course, the ship might broach-to, with the chance of being

wrecked to her lower masts, or foundering. A high sea chased us, but it was a following sea, and we swung over it comfortably, nothing damp from "the eyes" to the taffrail but the wet of the rain, and a ten-knot wake pouring off astern, lighting up the darkness there like moonshine when a squall blackened the planet. And all the while I was thanking my good angel the wind blew as it did; had it headed us, we must have sagged away to leeward under bladders of topsails, and flogging jibs and staysails; there would have been no virtue in reef-tackles as reef-points *that* night on a wind; but for the gale chasing us, the morning light would have disclosed aloft but little more than bolt-ropes and rags.

In those long hours, whilst watching the ship, I'd think of the Brigstock party, and wonder how they were managing. There was wind enough to blow away a stronger habitation than a tent. As to their notion of *my* chances—if ever they gave us a thought—they were sailors, and would know there was nothing in such a breeze as

this to hurt a running ship under such canvas as our vessel carried when they left her.

At daybreak the wind slackened. Whilst the dawn was brightening astern I saw land on the starboard bow, and rushed below for the chart and telescope. I had a clear conception of the ship's place, and was astonished and alarmed on looking at the chart to find that no land was marked where this was. As we steered, we should be giving the island a wide enough berth; but were there sunken reefs in the neighbourhood? I overhung the rail, and gazed with passionate anxiety ahead. The seas were arching everywhere in foam, but I nowhere caught any appearance of the boiling of water upon a shoal. I looked at the island through the glass, and saw some huts covered with reeds, and about ten or fifteen black figures running along the shore. The land was covered with bushes and cocoanut trees, and the windward point of coast was magnificent with the bursting of the seas upon it; the white water leapt up in mountains fifty feet high, and the flash

of the sun made a huge glorious jewel of each volcanic discharge.

The land slipped by at the rate of ten miles an hour, and in half that time was gone behind the ridges ; but until it vanished my heart was in my throat, for never could I tell but that in the next instant there would be the thrilling shock of arrest.

All this day it blew a fresh breeze ; sparkling green hills of water chased and helped us along. In twenty-four hours we made over two hundred and thirty miles of westing. In the afternoon I saw the shadow of land on the starboard beam, and just before sundown we passed an island, but it was on the chart, and I was prepared for it. I brought the ship's glass to bear, and distinguished a few huts, a row of canoes on the white fore-shore, and some red and white dogs, with one native only, close beside them, waving.

I contrived in snatches during the day to get as much sleep as would enable me to keep the deck all night. Shortly after sundown the wind scanted, the sea flattened, the vapour floated off the face of the heavens,

and we sailed in the midst of as fair a night as had ever darkened down upon us since we entered these seas. Many of the women, when the dusk fell, assembled round the main-hatch, and sung songs and hymns. I walked the deck with Kate for an hour in high spirits and full of confidence. The test of the preceding night had been as severe as any our run to Sydney was likely to impose upon the girls, and they had responded nobly.

“You said it might be done,” I exclaimed; “but I never hoped it would be so well done.”

“Almost ever since you first took charge of this ship, you have been drilling them,” said Kate.

“Yes, there’s no difficulty in learning the names of the ropes, and you can teach monkeys to pull and haul. But the wheel! Who’d dream that girls, in two months, should get the art of the helm as my seven have it? Look how finely that woman poses herself at the spokes,” said I, and we paused to look at the figure at the wheel.

The boyish outline was clear against the stars; in the sheen of the binnacle lamp, her white face sank and rose as she carried her eyes from the card to the canvas. I watched a star at the crossjack yardarm, and marked the pendulum accuracy of its motions there as it swung to the heave of the ship, and its oscillation was true to a hair.

"No old seaman could keep a vessel steadier to it," said I; "who's the girl?"

We walked aft; it was Alice Perry.

"Hard lines that the chief mate of a ship should have to steer her," said I, laughing. "I'm afraid I've spoilt you."

"Have you?" she answered.

"You'll not take to service after this?"

"P'raps not," she replied.

"You'll go dressed as a man through life, and some day command a ship," said Kate.

The girl strained her eyes through the sheen, but made no answer.

Five or six of the "crew" were walking about the poop. One of them suddenly cried out, "What's that?"

I said, "What do you see?"

She answered, "Isn't that a fire there?"

"It's the moon rising," exclaimed Kate.

I took the glass from the skylight, and resolved the little globe-shaped glow upon the horizon into a small tongue of flame, and after I had looked a minute, I distinguished the black dye of land. It was in the north; a few minutes later, a dim purple blush upon the horizon over the starboard quarter reddened into a scar of moon. The fragment of orb, bloated, distorted, soared off the rim of the sea; there was at this time a great hush upon the ship; the women on the main-deck, the girls aft, all of us were silent watching the moon rise, or looking at the distant native fire.

It was then there sounded in the air overhead such another long-drawn, peculiar moaning noise as had run like a sound of lamentation through the Atlantic hush on that night which preceded the suicide of Mary Lonney and my being sent adrift by Brigstock. Doubtless it proceeded from some invisible concourse of wild-fowl winging to an island; it's a sign that an island is

uninhabited, when you see many birds hovering over it. A number of uninhabited islands there were in those days hereabouts, and that strange melancholy cry echoing through the silence over our trucks was undoubtedly the piping of some migratory procession of sea-fowl, travelling by night for a reason known to themselves.

The sound was miserably dismal. The girls on the poop whilst listening to it crowded together as though terrified, and we all stared upwards, but nothing was to be seen there save a beautiful field of stars.

“Hallo!” cried I. “Where’s the ship going to?”

I looked round, and sprang to the wheel. Alice Perry had fallen on her knees beside it, and, with her face buried in her hands, was sobbing hysterically. I brought the ship to her course, whilst Kate and a dozen others gathered around that strange, kneeling, weeping, boyish figure.

“What is it, dear?” cried one.

“What’s the matter with her?” exclaimed another, in a voice of awe.



Kate knelt beside the sobbing girl, and soothingly addressed and caressed her ; but she held her face obstinately buried, and made no reply, only that she went on crying as though her heart was breaking. Then all at once springing to her feet, she exclaimed—

“It’s nothing. It’s all right now. Let me be, I tell yer ! Leave me alone, will yer ? —I want air !” and she went to the rail and overhung it.

The island, with the native signal-fire burning, was doubtless Elizabeth Island. As I hoped there might be nothing to fear in the way of shoals this side the Four Crowns, which were a day’s sail ahead, I altered the course to the southward by a point and a half, then called to Corbin, and delivered the wheel up to her. Kate wanted to talk to me about the singular wailing noise up in the air. It was time, however, for the women to go below, and I asked her to see to it and report the lights safe, and tell the women that the sound was made by birds, and not by ghosts, as I guessed many of them imagined.

"We heard the same noise that night Mary Lonney cut her throat," said Kate, as she was going. "I hope it'll be no ill omen this time."

Perry stood alone at the rail, right aft on the quarter; the hearty little Deal girl grasped the wheel. Others of the women-crew stood about the deck staring at the signal-fire, and talking about the sighing noise that had passed through the air. It was the influence of that noise still acting upon my nerves which made me find the ship a solemn visionary picture at this time, as though she had gathered from the star-shine, and the dusk, and the distorted corner of moon astern some quality of mystery which carried her out of nature. The moon made no light as yet, and the vessel swam in shadow. She lifted and fell upon the long black heave of the sea, her canvas pulling steadily, and little curls of dim fire ran aft from either bow. The point of light, sparkling upon the low inky dye of land, made a romantic wonder and even horror of the gloom there, with its suggestion of the savage

cannibal spirit, and midnight rites, and orgies without a name.

"What's the matter with you, Alice?" said I, going to her side, and putting my hand upon her shoulder.

She made no answer.

"Did that strange noise overhead just now scare you?"

"No," she replied, quickly. "Can't people wish themselves dead without being interfered with?"

"Why, my brave little woman, what's raised that ugly desire?"

"I wish I'd never been born," she exclaimed.

"So do most of us. You're hysterical. Come into the cuddy, and I'll give you a little brandy-and-water."

"I don't want anything. Isn't it beastly hard upon a girl that she should have feelin's and not know words to speak 'em with? If Miss Darnley had my thoughts, she'd make herself sweet to you with her language. She's a lady, and her father was a parson. Mine was a baker, which died of drink, and

left me to the parish. Why should there be such a difference? Them stars are pretty much alike; some are brighter than t'others—that's only 'cause they're nearer; they all shine; but it ain't so with people. Don't I know 'ow you're laughin' in your 'art at me, when you hear me talk, though your breedin' keeps your face calm?"

"Don't be a fool. I admire and respect you, so does Miss Darnley. All must who know you. Nature has made you a lady, and you're grumbling because she hasn't acted schoolmistress as well as mother."

"Don't talk rubbidge. A baker's brat a lady!"

Her eyes glowed in the starlight as they stared at me in her white face under the shaggy heap of hair upon her brow. She suddenly softened her voice, and said, "I'm sorry I let go the wheel. Yer angry with me for that."

"I could be angry with you for nothing but temper and silliness. To listen to *you* who have the heart of a heroine, with a finer spirit than ever I've met with in

your sex—to listen to *you* of them all on board talking twaddle! Come below. I'll give you a small glass of brandy. Then turn in."

She eyed me steadfastly whilst I spoke.

"I suppose," said she, "if ever we gets to Australia, you'll stop there a little, and then go 'ome?"

"Why, yes, I hope to go home."

"Shall you marry Miss Darnley there, or take her 'ome single?"

"Never you mind," said I, laughing and looking round towards the wheel, for Corbin was not out of earshot, though she was perhaps too occupied by her duty to hear us.

"'Ow long have you known her before you met her here?"

"No chief mate is permitted to cross-examine his captain in this fashion," said I; then fearing if I made her sulky she'd breed trouble amongst the others, I said, "I'm grateful to you, and as fond as I ought to be. They shall make a lady of you in Sydney. What should I have done without you?" and I took her hand.

She snatched it from me with a shudder, buried her face, then went forward.

Soon after she was gone, I heard a faint distant halloaing out upon the sea. It sounded as though it came from midway the ship and the low black shadow of island with the sparkle upon it; it was nearer, however, than that, as I had afterwards reason to suppose.

I pointed the glass at the place where the halloaing seemed to sound, imagining that some small Colonial trader was there; but seeing nothing, I concluded the shouts came from a canoe. The idea of a swarm of savages drawing within arrow-shot—fifty or a hundred of them, for all I could tell, so thick was the dusk upon the face of the water—would have frightened me horribly, but for our rate of going. I looked over the side, and calculated in the passage of the stars of sea-fire a full six, and I guessed that at *that*, if ever a chase was entered on, we'd soon be alone again.

Three times I heard that distant faint halloaing. Corbin asked what it was; none

of the others about the decks seemed to heed it.

Kate arrived, and said all was right in the 'tweendecks.

"Have you looked into the fore-castle?"

"No," she answered.

"Alice Perry's been talking very queerly; she's gone forward with her eyes on fire and a hand of ice. She is ill, or going to be. Step forward, will you, dear, and tell me how she does? She is a valuable hand, worth cherishing."

She went away without a word. Her silence was like a sulky look.

I stepped to the rail, and stared at the water in the direction whence the halloaing had come. In about a quarter of an hour Kate returned. She told me that Alice Perry was lying down and seemed well.

"She asked me," said she, "to beg you to forgive her for speaking rudely."

"A poor servant girl!" said I.

We bade each other good night, and she went to her quarters.

The moon was now glowing with some

power; the island had veered on to our quarter, and was just under the moon, like a little dusky cloud, with a faint sheet of greenish radiance trembling under it. I noticed a tiny black spot in the midst of that dim lustre, and on pointing my telescope saw it was a canoe; it seemed motionless whilst I watched, and presently the passage of our ship swept it into the shadow, and I lost it.

I replaced Corbin at the wheel by Barker, and told two of the women to keep a bright look-out whilst I went on to the fore-castle to take a view of the sea ahead. Nothing was to be seen. I let my naked sight sink into the obscurity then swept with the telescope (over and over again at night at sea the telescope has found me objects I had missed with the binocular glass). All was wide sea, darkling to the stars.

The scuttle, as the fore-castle hatch is called, lay open; I had no thought of prying into the privacy of the girls down there; but imagining that the lamp was making too strong a light, I stopped, and peered into



the hatch, and saw Alice Perry seated on the deck, writing on the fly-leaf of a book with the forecastle lamp beside her. This was highly improper and dangerous ; but as I did not wish to provoke her tongue after what had already passed, I went aft quickly, and told one of the girls to run forward and hook the lamp to its lanyard again.

“ If Perry resists,” said I, “ come to me.”

When the girl returned, she told me she found the lamp hanging under the beam as usual, and Perry getting into her bunk.

“ All right,” said I, and went aft, musing on the picture of Perry seated on the deck, and wondering what on earth she had written. It was news, indeed, to discover that the girl could even *read*. There was a grating over the tiller, and I got upon it to sit and smoke and doze. I was close to the wheel, and needed but to stretch my neck to see the compass-card. I was awakened from a short nap by Marshall coming to relieve the helm. I talked with her awhile, took a turn, smiled at the sight of three of my crew sound asleep on the skylight, and two of

them nodding with their backs against the companion, then returned to the grating and smoked and meditated, with an occasional spell of forty winks between whiles as before.

I had borrowed a watch from one of the women, and looking at it by-and-by found it was midnight. I called out at the top of my voice that it was eight bells; the sleepers awoke, half the watch came out of the cuddy, and the whole wearied lot of them went forward. After a bit, three or four girls of the other watch came on to the poop. One of them was Flo' Lewis, who, whilst approaching the wheel, stooped and peered and exclaimed—

“Isn't Perry here?”

“No,” I answered, going to her; “Marshall's at the wheel.”

“Then where's Perry, captain?” said Lewis.

“Isn't she in the forecastle?”

“No.”

I walked to the break of the poop and called for Alice Perry. The name was

caught up, and shrilly repeated by some girls on the main-deck. I said to some one who stood near—

“Run below and tell Miss Darnley that Perry’s missing, and ask her to search the ’tweendecks.”

I then went forward slowly, looking to right and left of me, for the girl had a fierce spirit, and I couldn’t guess what hellish intention might be covered by this hiding of herself. I peered warily and eagerly into the darkness about the foremast and galley, till I came to the forecastle, where I halted and asked permission to enter. A number of voices called to me to come in.

Thirteen or fourteen young women, looking for all the world like stout, well-grown boys in their clothes, were here, a few sitting in their bunks, most of them standing. They were talking about Alice Perry.

“What’s become of the girl?” said I. “Are you sure she’s not in her bed, hidden under a blanket?”

“That’s where she sleeps,” said one of the women, pointing to a bunk in the forepart

of the interior. "I take turn and turn with her in that shelf. Her coat's there."

"Her coat!" I walked to the bunk and picked up the garment, and saw a piece of paper pinned to the sleeve. I brought it to the light, and read, faintly pencilled in an extraordinary unformed handwriting, these words—

"I kil myself for ef I dont I shall kill K. D. let C. M. gess what for I keeps my own Secrait and carries my poor soul before Gord pure. A. P."

"She's committed suicide!" I said.

"There now!" shrieked a girl, "I told yer that noise meant the death of one of us."

I walked out, and the women followed me, silent with horror. I had scarcely gained the poop when Kate joined me.

"Alice Perry is not in our quarters," she said.

I took her to the binnacle, and gave her the paper to read by the lamplight there, and left her whilst I thoroughly searched the ship.

I called some of the girls to me, and we explored every nook and corner of the cuddy and steerage; I caused the 'tweendecks to be searched afresh. I overhauled the forecastle again, looked into the galley, ran aloft, fancying she might be in hiding in the tops or crosstrees. *Then*, knowing quite surely she was not in the ship, I realized what had happened and how; she had crept through the hatch out of the forecastle, and so got into the head of the ship, and dropped silently overboard!

Could nothing be done? It might have happened an hour before our discovery of it! The ship's speed was six knots; the women knew nothing about lowering and handling a boat. Had she taken the plunge but five minutes before we missed her, still there would have been no more chance of rescuing her, though she floated alive within the ship's own length, than of putting life into her body had we picked her up dead.

## CHAPTER X.

A NEWSPAPER CUTTING AND THE STORY  
PROCEEDS.

“THE emigrant ship, *Earl of Leicester*, arrived at this port early yesterday morning. She left the Thames with ninety unmarried female emigrants at the close of March last. When she had reached a few degrees south of the equator, she was struck by lightning, which killed the surgeon (Rolt), blinded the captain (Halcrow), and in some manner so injured the chief officer as to affect his brain, and shortly after the disaster the unfortunate gentleman threw himself overboard and perished.

“Captain Halcrow was, at his own request, transferred to a homeward-bound ship. Amongst those who went in the boat with

him were Mr. Jeremy Latto, the second mate, and James Cox, the boatswain. A heavy squall separated the vessels; dark tempestuous weather followed, and the female emigrants found themselves adrift in company with a diminished crew of sailors, and without a navigator!

“The ship was in this helpless state for ten days, in which time the crew, having plenty of leisure for thought, plotted with the ship’s carpenter, Brigstock, to settle an island in the South Pacific. They chose twelve (afterwards thirteen) women from amongst the emigrants. The girls, it is said, readily consented to become their wives. Many were jealous because they were not chosen. Of such is the nature of the female domestic.

“The most extraordinary part remains; since the crew could not manage to reach the Pacific without a navigator, they determined to steal one. A barque named the *Caroline*, of four hundred tons, hove in sight, all the female emigrants were ordered below, the hatches closed, and a signal of distress

hoisted. The barque sent her mate, Mr. Charles Morgan, to see what was wrong; he was conducted into the cabin, locked up, and the crew then sailed away with him. Finding himself helpless in the sailors' hands, and having already undergone an even wilder and more terrible experience, so that he felt careless as to what new adventure he embarked on, providing it was honest, Mr. Morgan consented to navigate the ship to an island.

“Soon after he took command, he trained a number of the women as sailors. He foresaw that when the crew left the vessel she would require fresh hands; he was determined to take no risks of South Sea rowdyism and ruffianism into his fore-castle, with a number of women in the ship, a valuable, or at least, a useful cargo in the hold, and himself the only officer on board. They rounded the Horn in June, and fell in with an island that suited them in the middle of July. Brigstock and his party went ashore, carrying with them about fifty tons of the *Earl of Leicester's* cargo. The



situation of the place will not be got from Mr. Morgan ; an oath of secrecy was imposed upon him by Brigstock and the crew in the presence of the women, and though it is true that—

‘Vows made in pain, ease will recant  
As violent and void ;’

yet Mr. Morgan shows a proper sense of honour and of the value of an oath by declining to supply any clue as to the whereabouts of Brigstock’s settlement. The women have been questioned ; but their descriptions are imperfect and convey no ideas upon which a theory of the island’s situation can be based. They speak of it as hilly and well-wooded ; so are most of the islands. It is more than probable, however, that his Excellency will send a vessel to search for the party.

“The ship’s agents are Messrs. Norton and Jackson, and the consignee of the cargo is the Government Emigration Agent. It is not conceivable that these gentlemen will accept the crew’s plea as stated by Mr. Morgan, and submit to be defrauded on the

grounds, first that money in wages is due to the crew, next that the men have a claim as salvors of property, third as salvors of life.

“To proceed: after the Brigstock party had landed, Mr. Morgan continued the voyage to this port, himself being the only man in the ship; his crew consisted of thirty girls, who, that they might not be inconvenienced by their petticoats in running about, were dressed in male attire, of which a large quantity forms a portion of the vessel's lading. Our readers will probably receive our assurance with incredulity; it is nevertheless the fact that Mr. Morgan navigated the vessel through several thousand miles of ocean with the assistance of his crew of women only! The thing is unprecedented. We are acquainted with but one marine incident which at all corresponds with it; we refer to the case of the female-convict ship, mentioned by Mrs. Colonel Elwood in her narrative of a journey to India in 1828. ‘A number of female convicts,’ she says, ‘having seized the vessel they were in, the determined Amazon, their leader, with her

own hands, cut off the head of the captain, and then, forcing the crew to navigate the vessel, carried it in triumph into a South American port, where the heroine is now established as the mistress of a hotel.' This is terrific—it is not even wanting in the sublime—but it is deficient in the heroic. The female convicts, as we have seen, compelled the men to work the ship. In Mr. Morgan's case the girls themselves did all the pulling and hauling, and in moderate weather the furling, for it is stated that he had taught some of them to stow the mizzen topgallant-sail and royal, whilst it is certain that seven of them proved as expert at the helm as any master could wish his sailors to be.

"The women, on their arrival, were sent by the Agent to the Immigration Dépôt, where they have been visited by crowds of people. Many of them have already obtained engagements. Mr. Morgan has not a single case of sickness to report during the voyage. Strangely enough there were two suicides, each of them rendered remarkable by a

melancholy prophetic wailing in the air heard by all hands on the nights preceding the tragic occurrences. One of the girls, Mary Lonney, cut her throat with a table-knife whilst she lay on the sleeping-shelf with her companions; it is universally allowed by the women that she was insane. The other, Alice Perry, drowned herself on the second night following the ship's departure from the island by silently lowering herself over the bows and dropping into the sea.

“The scene of leave-taking between Mr. Morgan and the women whom he has served so nobly was exceedingly interesting and moving. They crowded about him, they kissed his hands, many saluted his cheeks; they blessed him again and again, coming back a dozen times to bless him once more, and press his hand. The ship will immediately begin to discharge, and then load wool for London. It is almost certain that the command of her will be given to Mr. Charles Morgan, who holds a certificate as master-mariner.”

So ran the account of the ship's arrival and voyage to Sydney from Bull's island, as printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of that date.

It was the morning following our arrival in Sydney Bay. All the women had gone ashore on the preceding afternoon—Kate amongst them. I had asked her what she meant to do.

“Mean to do!” she replied, with a look of wonder. “I shall go with the rest to the Immigration Depôt, and stop there till somebody hires me as a governess.”

“Very well,” said I; “but you’ll let me have your address should you be quickly engaged?”

“Where shall I send it?”

“Address me to the care of Messrs. Norton and Jackson.”

After a few more sentences to the above effect, we had parted, she having stood aloof whilst all the rest were crowding about me; then, when they were gone, coming to me.

We had entered the Heads on Monday at dawn of day, August 28th, 1851: this

was Tuesday the 29th, a lovely clear morning: scores of pleasure boats whitened the bright blue waters of the magnificent harbour—the coves were filled with shipping—crowds of boats hovered about us, their occupants staring with devouring eyes at the *Earl of Leicester*. Men and women were galloping on horseback along the crescent-shaped slips of sand. The gleam of white houses amid the thick foliage, the sweeping bays wooded to the very sip of the surf, the carriages appearing and disappearing amongst the trees, the crowds of people, many-coloured with military uniforms and the gay apparel of women, walking to and fro upon a promenade close to the town, formed a picture infinitely refreshing, as you will suppose, to my eyes worn dim with the ceaseless look-out I had been forced to keep, and with the hundred days of ocean I had lived through.

I was talking to Mr. Jackson, one of the ship's agents, on the poop, recounting all the particulars of my voyage, not omitting my experience on board the *Hebe*, and was

explaining why it was that many leaves of the log-book were torn out, and no entries made since the Brigstock lot had left the ship, when a short man, in a white hat and a yellow coat, and a head round as a cannon-ball, very blue where the cheek was shaved, and the eyes small, black, and sharp, came over the side, and stepped on to the poop. He saluted me with a low, theatrical bow, and then nodded to Mr. Jackson, as though knowing him.

“I have the honour, I believe,” said he, “of addressing Captain Charles Morgan?”

I answered that was so.

“May I be permitted, sir, to shake the hand of a living ’ero?”

He advanced his arm, and we shook hands.

“My name, sir, is Levy.” (This was not his name, but it will serve.) “I’m manager of the Theatre Royal. My object in intruding’s this: I’ve had an interview with the Immigration Agent, and he’s willing the ’eroic young parties as formed your crew—wonderful thing, sir, most wonderful, in-

deed!" he ejaculated, interrupting himself to gaze along the deck, and then up aloft—"shall appear in the male clothes which they wore during the voyage, upon the stage of my theatre, at a performance to be given for their benefit."

"What do the girls say?" said Mr. Jackson.

"All, with the exception of five, are at the Dépôt. They are proud and 'appy to oblige. The other five are easily assembled—making twenty-nine in all. Sorry to hear you lost the favourite. If Alice Perry was what they tell me, she should have had ten pound a week. Captain, I'm 'ere to ask you to do me the honner, to do the town of Sydney the honner, to appear upon my stage in company with your crew. What a picture it'll make, sir!" he cried, addressing Mr. Jackson, with a grin of triumphant enjoyment of the vision of it.

"Not for all the value of the wool in this colony," said I.

"How, sir?" he cried, with a tragic start.



I gave him "No," again, very warmly.

"But," he exclaimed, with a face of mortification, "you'll not object to occupying a box?"

"How do you know?" said I.

However, on his representing that the whole receipts of the performance, without deduction of any sort, would be handed over to the women, and that my absence must lessen the attraction of the exhibition, I consented to be present.

Mr. Levy then shook hands with me, and went on shore, after saying I should hear from him when he had fixed a night.

Next morning, having some leisure, I walked to the Immigration Dépôt, a large, walled barrack, where single females, on the arrival of an emigrant ship, were lodged, boarded, and looked after. I hoped to see Kate, having something on my mind to communicate, but I arrived too late. Twenty minutes earlier a lady had called in a carriage, to drive her to Darlington, to settle, as I understood, the terms of an engagement.

This same day I was informed by Mr. Jackson that the command of the *Earl of Leicester* was mine, and that I was to carry her home with a cargo of wool, tallow, horns, and other Australian produce. I believe, but for this offer, I should have been tempted to try my luck at the gold-diggings. In the preceding May, gold had been discovered in the Bathurst district, and the colony at this time was crazy over the find. Trade was almost paralyzed by the desertion of labour. A blue-and-red serge shirt, a cabbage-tree hat, a leather belt, gold-digging gloves, a pair of mining-boots, and a couple of blankets, topped with a thirty-shilling licence for the privilege to dig, sufficed to equip a man for the realization of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Nothing sobered me but the agent's offer. It came not one hour too soon. Mr. Jackson had advanced some money to me, and I should have been off next day for Wellington, or Ballarat, or Geelong, but for the *Earl of Leicester*.

But, having accepted the post, I became straightway a very busy man. The people

of Sydney would have made much of me. I received dozens of invitations to dinner. A score of houses were opened to me. The proprietor of Petty's Hotel begged me to use his house, free of all charge, whilst I was in Sydney; but I dined nowhere save at Mr. Jackson's, and one or two other houses. I lived on board the ship, and wanted no better home.

Three days after I had called upon Kate at the Immigration Dépôt, I received a letter from her. She had accepted a situation as governess to the children of a family living at Darlinghurst; she did not yet know whether she would like the place. They gave her twenty-five pounds a year, which did not seem more than the pay of such posts in England. She congratulated me upon having obtained command, asked me to let her know the day on which the ship sailed, and hoped I would call and say good-bye before I left.

I read the letter with a smile. In every word of it was the same spirit which had confined her to the dark, melancholy 'tween-

decks when the bright, cheerful cuddy was at her service.

I was busy with the affairs of the ship one morning within a week of our arrival, when Mr. Norton, one of the agents, came on board, and told me that his Excellency, Sir Charles Augustus Fitzroy, Governor of New South Wales, would be glad to see me if I called upon him that afternoon.

Accompanied by Mr. Norton, I attended at Government House, a fine building, with great staring windows. My reception was very flattering and gratifying. Sir Charles was one of the finest, most accomplished gentlemen I ever met, or my slender social experience could figure. He introduced me to Lady Mary Fitzroy, and I passed an hour with them, going over the ground which you have traversed in this book.

I perceived that his Excellency was extremely anxious to learn the situation of Brigstock's island, but his courtesy and high sense of honour would not suffer him to question me. He was much amused by my representation of Brigstock's scheme,

and said that it would be a bad look-out for the hopes of that patriarch and father if news of the gold-find reached the settlement, "for in that case they'll not long remain there," said he.

I asked if steps would be taken to discover the island, and bring the settlers to Sydney. He said yes. He shook me cordially by the hand, and made me many handsome compliments when I took my leave.

I had no idea, however, until some days afterwards, that this agreeable reception was no more than the engaging preface to an honour, and to an expression of public feeling, the time, the manner, the circumstance of which I cannot recall without emotion. It happened too long ago to bring modesty into question in the narrative of it.

I went to dine with Mr. Jackson at his house in Lyons' Terrace; the day was a Tuesday. Before we repaired to the dining-room, Mr. Jackson said—

"You are to receive a fine compliment, Captain Morgan; I hope you won't decline it."

“What is it, sir?”

“The inhabitants of Sydney have subscribed a purse for you, and his Excellency has expressed his willingness to present it publicly, at the Theatre Royal.”

“He is very kind, and so are the inhabitants of Sydney,” said I, feeling uncomfortably nervous and pale on a sudden. “Of course, if it is the general wish—indeed, the part Sir Charles takes lays a command upon me—what shall I be expected to do?”

“Smile and pocket the money.”

“No speech?”

“Oh, a few manly sentences.”

My throat felt dry.

“I’d rather sail the *Earl of Leicester* round the world with six women for a crew than face it,” said I.

“Tut, tut! Besides, it will be a fine advertisement for the ship, both here and at home.”

I shrugged my shoulders. But the long and short of it was, Mr. Jackson meant that I should accept, and seeing that he represented the owners of the *Earl of Leicester*,

there was nothing for it but expostulation and submission.

Whilst lunching at Petty's Hotel next day, I heard that Mr. Levy of the Theatre Royal was at the bottom of this theatrical presentation. The Mayor of Sydney headed the subscription-list, and Mr. Levy had postponed the exhibition of my sailor crew till my presence was to be secured on the stage. I suppose the rogue guessed I was bound to consent to any programme the Governor approved, and was willing to figure in. The fact is, as it afterwards turned out, Levy had offered engagements to several of my crew of women to act in a nautical drama he and another had planned, and our benefit was intended as his advertisement.

"You can't trust 'em," the master of a ship said to me in the course of a chat about this benefit and Levy's motives. "There's a verse in the New Testament that fits all that sort of philanthropists ;" and he quoted in a deep-sea voice, "*This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief.*"

## CHAPTER XI.

## AND LAST.

THE benefit and presentation were fixed by his Excellency to take place on a Monday evening, that is about ten or twelve days after the arrival of the ship at Sydney. In all this time, owing to my having had scarcely an hour to myself, I had seen nothing of Kate Darnley; a few letters had passed between us, and I was aware that she was fairly comfortable, though I found no note of good spirits in what she wrote. When I was informed that Monday was the night of the presentation, I asked her in a letter to attend the theatre with me. She wrote yes; requested me to fetch her, and enclosed an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Carey, in whose family she was governess.



On Monday afternoon I drove to Mrs. Carey's villa in Darlington. Kate received me alone in the drawing-room. She was dressed in white, ready for the play; not a shilling's worth of jewellery was on her save a plain ring and a little brooch which had been her mother's. She wore some lovely red flower of those lands in her rich black hair; her eyes were soft and wistful; I missed the clear light that glowed in them at sea. She looked sweet and well, a fine, full figure of a girl, and a lady.

"This," said I, as I gazed round the charmingly furnished apartment, "is almost as brilliant and breezy as the cuddy of the *Earl of Leicester*. Are you kindly treated?"

"Very kindly."

"Are you happy?"

"I am now," she answered.

I misunderstood her, and said, "You must give yourself time to find people out."

"I don't mean that. I am happy now because you're here. It does me good to see you. I am at Blathford again——" She broke off.

"I would have been with you every day, but could not."

"When do you sail?"

"The date's not yet fixed; in eight or ten weeks hence, I dare say." Finding her silent, I said, "Have you made any friends? People, I mean, who ask you to their houses, and cultivate you for yourself?"

"No, nor am I likely to do so as a governess. Those I have met are stiff and distant. I don't fancy they want poor ladies out here. The position is a false one in England; it is falser still in this country. I feel as though people walked around me, and eyed me from head to heel, saying, 'What's this? It's not a servant, nor is it a working woman. It can't be a lady, because it's poor and lives by teaching. What then is it?' That's how they make me feel."

"Kate, what will grieve you more than people's behaviour is the thought that England is sixteen thousand miles off."

"Don't speak of it!" she cried quickly, with a passionate shake of her head, as though angered by some sudden trouble of

tears. "Let it be as far distant as the moon, I am as friendless there as here. What has distance to do with the sorrow or happiness of such as I? Distance is not time."

"Kate, when I am in England, you'll not be without a friend there," said I.

She looked at me peevishly, went to the window, and exclaimed, "Is not this a sweet picture of a garden?"

"Not so sweet as a garden I know at Blathford."

"Look at those heavenly little green parrots! How merrily they whistle! I am getting to know many of the names of the trees and flowers. But oh, for the real thing! Those trees are not the ash nor the larch, though they try to look so, nor is that the fuchsia, lovely as it is with its delicate pendulous flowers. Nor is that the true rose! There's no perfume; the birds have no song. Will they ever get garden scents and the music of the woods in this land? But they'll not want it!" she exclaimed, turning to me with a pout. "There are no memories and traditions for birds to

sweeten and flowers to colour. In a thousand years hence perhaps it will be a country of legend, and then the nightingale may sing to the moon in the north, and the owl hoot in ruins. It's too long to wait!" said she.

Just then Mrs. Carey entered, a tall, handsome lady, very richly dressed for the play, and in a few minutes I was deep in talk with her on the now inevitable subject of my experiences in the Pacific. Half an hour later we went to dinner, an elegant Australian meal, of which I recollect but these dishes: wallaby-tail soup, wonga-wonga pigeon, kangaroo venison, and a wonderful dessert of plantains, guavas, and cherimoyers.

The Careys had taken seats at the theatre, and Mrs. Carey sat at dinner in full fig; she had dazzling shoulders and splendid diamonds, and her age was about eight and forty; the brightness was something dimmed in her large blue eyes. Fine, but fading; yet had there been a time—

“When the gleam of her silken sock had drawn  
Sighs from an epaulet!”

We started together, the Careys in their own, Kate and I in a hired carriage. The road opposite the theatre was crowded with people; every variety of the Larrikin and Cornstalk was there assembled; the coachman forced his way to the entrance with difficulty, and, taking Kate by the hand, I quickly passed into the lobby, where almost the first person I met was Mr. Levy. He saluted me as though I had been his Excellency himself, and accompanied us at once to a small private box overlooking the stage, where he stayed a few minutes to rapidly run through the programme of the evening.

Already the theatre was crammed. I took a peep at the ocean of hair in the pit—the colony was too young for bald heads in those days—and warily squinted at the billows of faces rolling down from gallery to circle.

“They mean to convey me on to that stage there, where I shall have to make a speech,” said I. “The very thought deprives me of utterance, and my tongue feels to be coiled up like a rope that wants the turns taken out of it.”

“Say little, and think only of what you say, not at all of those who listen. Have you got a speech by heart?”

“Twenty, and I forget them all.”

At this moment the orchestra played “God save the Queen,” and Sir Charles and Lady Mary, and two or three others, all brilliant in uniform, her ladyship gorgeous in satin and sparkling ornaments, entered a large stage box almost abreast of the one we occupied. I kept out of sight, and Kate sat well back.

The curtain rose upon a nautical drama. It was called *Tempest-Tossed*. I suppose there is nothing in the world’s literature so bad as the British nautical drama; and there could be nothing in the British nautical drama worse than *Tempest-Tossed*. It contained a libel on us gentlemen of the jacket in the character of a mate, who four or five times during the performance ran up out of a trap-door, chased by black-beetles, and mad with delirium tremens; in vain the wretch tried to cast himself overboard; the manly bawling crew—and how that crew did bawl!—hauled

him back, and remorselessly flung him down again through the trap-door to his hell of vermin below.

However, even the worst of the acting was handsomely applauded ; everything pleased ; when a piece of the scenery stuck they cheered. The curtain fell at ten o'clock, and I observed a movement in his Excellency's box, and fancied I caught a vision of Mr. Levy's face amongst the uniforms. Suddenly the orchestra struck up "Hearts of Oak," the curtain rose, and my spirits sank. All this while the pit and gallery were roaring, for when the curtain rose, this was the picture it exposed : At the back was a representation, very well done, of Sydney Bay, with the *Earl of Leicester* at anchor ; the colours of all nations were draped on either hand, and to left and right, in front of the stage, hung huge British ensigns, the crimson cross, the royal standard, and other flags of our country. On each side of the stage were grouped the girls who had formed my crew. Levy had collected them all, and there they were ! Yes !

There was Emmy Read, and there were Charlotte Brown and brave little Susannah Corbin, Fanny Pike, Mabel Marshall—the whole of them saving Alice Perry; all dressed in the clothes they had worn at sea.

But even whilst I was locking, and whilst the pit and gallery were thundering, the door of our box was opened, and Mr. Levy entered to bear me away to the stage. I followed with the sensations of a malefactor who walks from his cell to the place where he is to be pinioned. Mr. Levy sought to cheer me up, and when we arrived behind the scenes he gave me a bumper of champagne. I heard somebody talking on the stage; there was now a profound stillness in the house. I approached the “wings,” and perceived a gentleman in a frock-coat close to the footlights addressing the audience. I asked Mr. Levy what the gentleman was doing. He said he was relating the story of the adventures of the *Earl of Leicester*. The gentleman was frequently interrupted by clapping and cheers. Mr. Levy told me the



speaker was Mr. Littleworth, the distinguished tragedian; he had been sent to this country in trouble, and on his enlargement had betaken himself to the stage. He declaimed with a deep thrilling voice that reminded me of Brigstock's.

I was too nervous to heed him, and all the while was trying to hearten myself by looking at the girls of my crew, many of whom stood plain in my sight, though they could not see me. Presently Mr. Littleworth ceased; this was the dreaded "cue."

"Now, captain," said Mr. Levy, and marched me right on to the middle of the stage.

I do not recollect what then exactly happened. I was carried down to the orchestra, which struck up at the sight of me, and the noise was deafening, whilst the hurrahs roared in the building like the bellowing of a Horn gale through naked spars.

Mr. Levy led me to the box where sat the Governor, who arose amid a profound stillness, and addressed me. The newspapers printed a full account of this presentation,

but why should I inflict the speeches upon you? Enough if I say that Sir Charles, after speaking for about a quarter of an hour, handed me a purse of seven hundred guineas, "in testimony of the admiration felt by the people of Sydney for my having delivered from a situation of terrible peril between seventy and eighty helpless female emigrants, who, but for the judgment I had exhibited, might have suffered even a worse fate than shipwreck."

All this was well understood, *and it was true.*

I stuttered out a few sentences of thanks, though I was afterwards told I did not make so ill a figure as I had supposed.

When the presentation was over, the curtain fell amidst a fresh outburst of roaring; but for another quarter of an hour I was occupied behind the scenes in shaking hands with my girls, asking them questions, and drinking their health in champagne.

In the lobby of the theatre, whilst on my way with Kate to the carriage I had hired, we met Mr. and Mrs. Carey, who wanted to

drive us home; but my opportunities for seeing Kate were few, and I wished to be alone with her. Then would I take a bed at their house in Darlington? I accepted the offer with thanks. They got into their landau, and Kate and I followed in a cab.

I pulled out the purse, and by help of the lamp-posts we passed, found that the gift was in notes, with fifty pounds in gold and odd money to make up the guineas.

"What do you think of it all?" said I to Kate, whilst I pocketed the money.

"I'm very glad you're so fortunate."

"Nothing of it's deserved, I suppose? It's all luck!"

"A bit of both," she answered.

"Did I make a good speech?"

She laughed, but returned no answer.

"How long will it take," said I, "for the people of this liberal and prosperous colony to forget all about my exploit?"

"They can think of nothing but the gold-diggings. If I were a man, I would go and dig. Mr. Carey was saying yesterday that he met a man who in three days had found

gold, at a place called Ophir, worth eleven hundred pounds. His cradle cost him five shillings, and his whole outfit two pounds twelve ! ”

“ I ’ m going home to London , ” said I , and began to whistle . Presently I said , “ I may now consider myself very well off . What don ’ t I owe to Brigstock ? He stole me , and now behold me ! I ’ m worth seven hundred pounds odd , in what is termed hard cash ; I ’ ve obtained command at twelve pounds a month ; the agents assure me that the owners are not likely to resist any modest claims I may make for salvage—for preserving the ship and most of the cargo , anyhow . There ’ s no earthly reason , now that I ’ m skipper of the vessel , why I shouldn ’ t go on holding that post till they give me another appointment , unless I go into steam , which I ’ ve rather a fancy for . Don ’ t I owe Brigstock much , Kate ? ”

“ Why , yes ; as you put it . ”

“ He brought us together , Kate . ”

“ In the middle of the ocean . ”

“ I once said you should sail home with me

in the cuddy of the *Earl of Leicester*. Do you remember?"

She was silent. I felt for and found her hand and held it.

"Do you remember?" I repeated.

"Yes."

"I also on several occasions said that you were my only mate."

"You always put Alice Perry before me."

"Chaw, my honeybird! See here, Kate. You know what's coming; not that I feel it in your hand, though most girls, it's said, tremble on these occasions. You know what's coming, Kate?"

"How can I imagine?"

"Will you be my wife?"

"Oh, Charlie . . .! Are you in earnest?"

"Do you think I'm old Harding or Jupe Jackson? In earnest!" and here I put my arm round her waist.

She made no fuss, but said quite calmly, "Charlie, I love you, and if I did not know that as a wife I should be a burthen to you, I'd say yes. Think it over, dear; you'll

have plenty of leisure whilst sailing home, and you may come out here again. If you do, and are still of the same mind, you'll find me ready."

"Perhaps married," said I.

"No."

"Think! You are the sweetest girl in this colony. How long shall you remain single? There may be a jolly old squatter there, or there," cried I, pointing through one window, then through the other, "with a fortune of a hundred thousand waiting for you. What though the iron in times gone by *did* enter his ankles? His soul is purged of the Old Bailey. He's now a fine old gentleman with such another house to live in as Rosslyn Hall or Larbert Cottage; he drives a better turn-out than the Governor's, and has but another hurdle or two to jump for the premiership. Give me this hand before he takes it!" said I, squeezing her fingers.

She laughed softly and nervously, and said, "You're not old enough to marry."

"Don't believe it!"

“You can’t know your own mind.”

“I know my own heart.”

“Oh, Charlie, I wish I knew what to do!”

And now I really felt the dear girl’s hand tremble.

“Say yes. They were quick enough aboard ship. Hannah didn’t keep Brigstock waiting in this fashion.”

Then losing patience, I caught her in my arms, brought her face to mine, and held her till she said yes, by which time we were within three minutes of Mrs. Carey’s house.

So reluctant are girls to get married!

\* \* \* \* \*

I sailed from Sydney, a married man, in command of the *Earl of Leicester*, on the 24th of October, 1851, and with me went my young wife and six saloon and fourteen steerage passengers. The voyage home was as flat and commonplace a procession of weeks as the passage out had been feverishly exciting with incident, menace, and ever-haunting peril, and we anchored in the river Thames, on the 30th of January, 1852,

without a log-entry good enough to detain the eye for a moment.

You will not suppose that in all these months I had forgotten the *Hebe* and Captain Cadman and Mr. Fletcher of Bristol. Ever since the hour of my regaining consciousness on the great Salvage Island, I had determined, when I got home, to swear an information against the scoundrels who, whether they had succeeded or not in defrauding the underwriters, were to all intents and purposes my murderers. And now my ship was hardly berthed in the West India Docks, when I received news of the *Hebe*.

Messrs. Norton and Jackson had, as may be supposed, written a full account of my experiences to the owners of the *Earl of Leicester*, by an early ship soon after my arrival at Sydney; therefore, on my meeting Mr. Donald Grant, a partner in the firm, almost the first words he addressed to me were—

“Did you hear as you came up Channel that they succeeded in wrecking the *Hebe* in



Table Bay? but so clumsily that the man Fletcher was drowned along with two of the crew; so clumsily, indeed, that the rogue Cadman, through over-talking himself with Fletcher during the passage out, put it into the power of the crew to inform against him! Portions of the cargo which washed ashore were examined; the wreck as she lay stranded was overhauled, and Cadman was sent home to take his trial on the charge of casting the brig away."

I listened with open-mouthed, devouring attention, astounded, delighted.

"Is Cadman in custody in this country?"

"Ay, they have him snug and tight in the Old Bailey."

"Oh, well, sir, I do thank God for that! I'll give evidence against him. Thunder! but I'm grateful I'm in time!"

As early as possible I procured the address of the solicitors for the prosecution. They welcomed me. It seems that the man had almost slipped through their fingers. The ship he had been sent home in touched at Madeira, and Cadman escaped by swimming

to a vessel that lay closer inshore than his own; he hung by her cable—it was night-time—and called for help, and was put ashore by the ship's boat, the seamen, who were French, supposing that he belonged to the island, and had been capsized whilst out fishing.

He secreted himself to so much purpose that this advertisement was widely distributed—

“Ship *Hebe*—Felony—£100 Reward!—Whereas James Cadman, Master Mariner, late Captain of the brig *Hebe*, bound from Bristol to Capetown, in the month of March last, and wrecked off Green Point in Table Bay, in the month of May last, stands charged with felony for having wilfully destroyed the said ship *Hebe* on her said voyage, for the purpose of defrauding the Insurance Companies or Underwriters, who had effected insurances by the said vessel. A Reward of £100 will be paid to any person who will lodge him in any of Her Majesty's gaols, upon an application to——”

Here followed the name of an insurance

office, together with a description of Cadman, which I own made me laugh, for it was exceedingly good.

Cadman escaped from Madeira in a schooner; his adventures afterwards I am unable to relate. When next heard of he had arrived in England in the *William Wallace* from Cape de Verde, whether in custody or not I cannot say; on landing he was immediately collared and locked up.

His trial took place in April, at the Central Criminal Court. There was yet a fortnight till the sailing of the *Earl of Leicester*, and I was able to attend the trial without inconvenience. Cadman, I presume, did not know that I was to be called, and I shall never forget the scoundrel's face when he saw me. For months he had thought of me as dead. Fletcher had come off from the island, and said he had thrown me over a hundred feet of cliff. It is no trifling shock to stumble suddenly upon a man whom you have been told is dead, and are used to think of as buried; but how volcanic must be the emotions of one who on a sudden meets face to face a person

whom he knows was murdered, and in whose assassination he was concerned !

The visage of the miscreant at sight of me would have convicted him, though there had been no other evidence of his guilt. I see him now as he stood in the dock, eyeing me with his malevolent, askant gaze, motionless, yellow, every muscle of his face rigid, as though I had been the devil fleshed in the most frightful of the monkish imaginations of that spirit, waiting for the Judge to pass sentence to fly away with him.

The man was, of course, guilty, and the jury pronounced him so—that is, of casting the *Hebe* away (he was not charged with conspiring to murder me; possibly because they could not have brought it home to him). The evidence was damning, and I had the satisfaction of hearing the judge sentence James Cadman to be transported beyond the seas for the term of his natural life.

I was in Sydney again in August, 1852, and heard that an armed brig, which had been despatched to search for the Brigstock settlement, had returned without having any-

thing to report. I saw her log-book, and understood why they had not fallen in with Bull's island. Some pressure, as the term is, was put upon me to disclose the men's whereabouts, but I kept the oath and the secret with an obstinacy worthy a better cause.

However, when a voyage later I was again at Sydney, they had news to give me. A colonial trader, belonging to Melbourne, had spoken a whaler; the captains exchanged visits during a prolonged calm, and the whaling captain told the other that he had touched at an island he once or twice visited for water and nuts, and, greatly to his surprise, found it inhabited by white men and women. He said that the chief of the party was one Brigstock—a grave, formal, solemn-faced fellow. They had built themselves a village, and appeared to want for nothing; yet some of them seemed restless and uneasy. The whaling skipper, who had heard of the affair of the *Earl of Leicester*, guessed who those people were, and told them that the Governor of New South Wales had despatched an armed vessel in search of

them. He also gave them the news of the discovery of gold in the Wellington and Bathurst districts. This intelligence he had got from a Yankee at the Sandwich Islands.

The little trading schooner arrived at Melbourne with this report, which was immediately forwarded to the Governor of Sydney. No latitude and longitude had been stated by the whaling skipper; but the master of the schooner gathered from the other's conversation that the island the Brigstock party had settled was situated on the parallel of Hercules Island, some leagues to the eastward of it.

The armed brig found the island without difficulty; a boat's crew went ashore. The village, as described by the whaling skipper, was discovered charmingly situated in a beautiful valley near the great lagoon. Every house stood in a large enclosed garden; but not a living creature was to be seen!

The goods taken from the hold of the *Earl of Leicester* were distributed amongst the houses, or stored in a little gallery of natural caverns on the north shore of the island. They were collected and taken on board, and

when they were examined at Sydney, the quantity missing—chiefly tinned food, wearing apparel, blankets, and the like—did not exceed in value the amount the ship was indebted to the sailors for wages.

Of Brigstock and his family of settlers, nothing was ever heard—nothing, at all events, that reached my ears. The boats they had taken had not been seen by the people of the armed brig; it was assumed that the party had gone aboard a vessel, and that the boats had been held in discharge of the cost of giving the women a passage—the men working it out for themselves. No doubt the people had been alarmed by learning that an armed brig was seeking them; their views, too, on settling and becoming Fathers and Elders might also have been disturbed by the news of gold in a Continent that was hard by. Likely enough, they all went secretly to some Australian port and there dispersed, each man taking his pardner with him—or *not!* as it might have happened. I own I lamented this failure of Brigstock's scheme. He deserved

a better fortune. Spite of his and the men's inhuman usage of me, I am bound to say a straighter-headed, more sober, respectable body of men never swung in hammocks at sea. I had great hope of their establishing a successful little colony, and was astonished to learn that after they had built homes for themselves they had suffered the news of a brig being in search of them, to break them up.

Now for a final curious incident; it was in this same year of 1853, and my ship was lying abreast of the wool-sheds at Sydney, loaded down to the chain-plate bolts, ready to sail in three days. I was writing a letter at the cuddy-table, when the chief officer came in, and said that a lady was on the quay-side asking permission to step aboard and see me.

"Doesn't she give her name?" said I.

"No, sir. She's a handsome woman, finely dressed, yet she don't look a lady either."

"Bring her aboard, and show her aft here," said I.

I went on with my letter. Presently I



was sensible of somebody entering the cuddy-door. I dropped my pen, started up, looked, and yet looked again, almost as stiff with the paralysis of astonishment as Cadman had been at sight of me.

It was Alice Perry!

I recognized her in a moment, for all that I had thought her dead as the ooze at the bottom of the salt sea. She was dressed as fashionably as any grand lady in Sydney at that time; the sight of me filled her face with colour; her eyes sparkled; and she advanced, her hand extended, with one of her well-remembered smiles, a very glare of large white teeth.

"Cap'n," she cried, "do you want an 'ousemaid?" And she burst into one of her hysteric shrieking laughs, to the amazement of the mate, a sober, slow-minded Irishman, who stood viewing us at the cuddy-door.

I peered at her with my head stretched forward, like one game-cock looking at another, incredulous of the evidence of my vision. I then said, taking her hand—

"I thought you were drowned?"

"I ought to be," she answered, "and all along of you, too—but that's passed." Yet she gave me a look as she said this which made me fancy it was not quite so.

I made her sit, and sat beside her, and then, after I had answered the fifty questions she plied me with—If it was true I had married Kate Darnley; if I could tell her what had become of my crew of girls, and how they were doing; if it was true the Brigstock settlement had been broken up, and so on—she related her extraordinary story.

She told it with her eyes on fire, her cheeks hot as a tropic sunset, but with a most intrepid, audacious expression of face.

She had thought herself in love with me, and so she might have been, she said; her jealousy was making a devil of her; often when Kate Darnley had been quietly talking with her, she had scarcely been able to restrain her passion of desire to stab her to the heart. She feared she would go mad. She was in secret most horribly miserable; so she resolved to destroy herself.

The night she was missing, after writing

her strange letter to me, she climbed over the bows (as I had supposed), and dropped silently. The ship rippled onwards, leaving her floating astern ; she declared she floated an hour in full consciousness, watching the stars, and wondering if God would forgive her. All then was blank till, coming to her senses, she found herself in a native hut, viewed by a number of dusky men and women.

Undoubtedly she had been picked up by the canoe whose people I had heard holloaing—that speck I had noticed in the midst of the silver under the moon. The natives treated her with great humanity. An old chief asked her to be his wife. They offered her no indignities, and let her do as she liked. As her male attire wore out, they furnished her with a covering of tappa. She lived in this condition for seven months, during which time she never saw a ship.

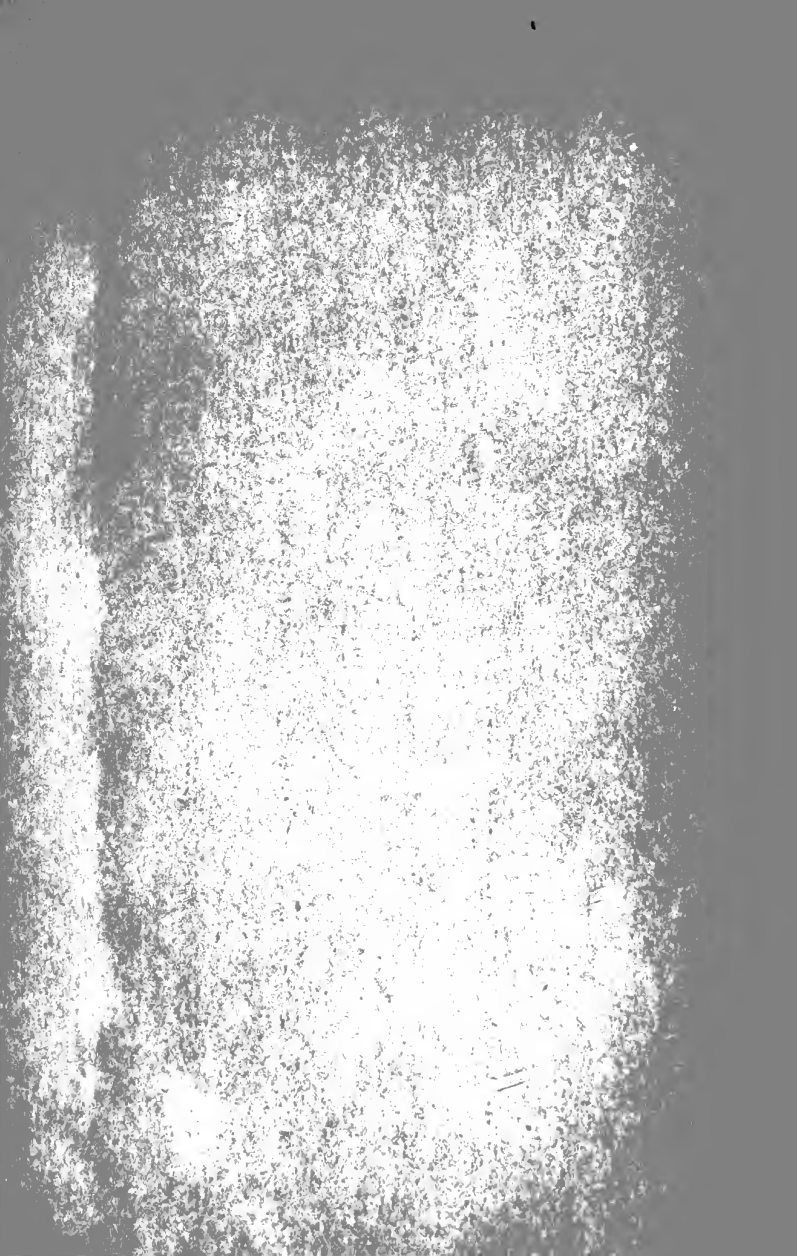
At last one morning a small barque appeared off the island. At her request, without the least manifestation of reluctance, the natives put her aboard, and she was carried to Hobart Town, where she married a young butcher.

Her husband, hearing of the gold rush, brought her to Australia, where he was fortunate enough to pick up in a few months a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. She was living, she told me, in a little villa at a place called (I forget the name). Would I visit her? Would I honour her and her husband by dining with them next day?

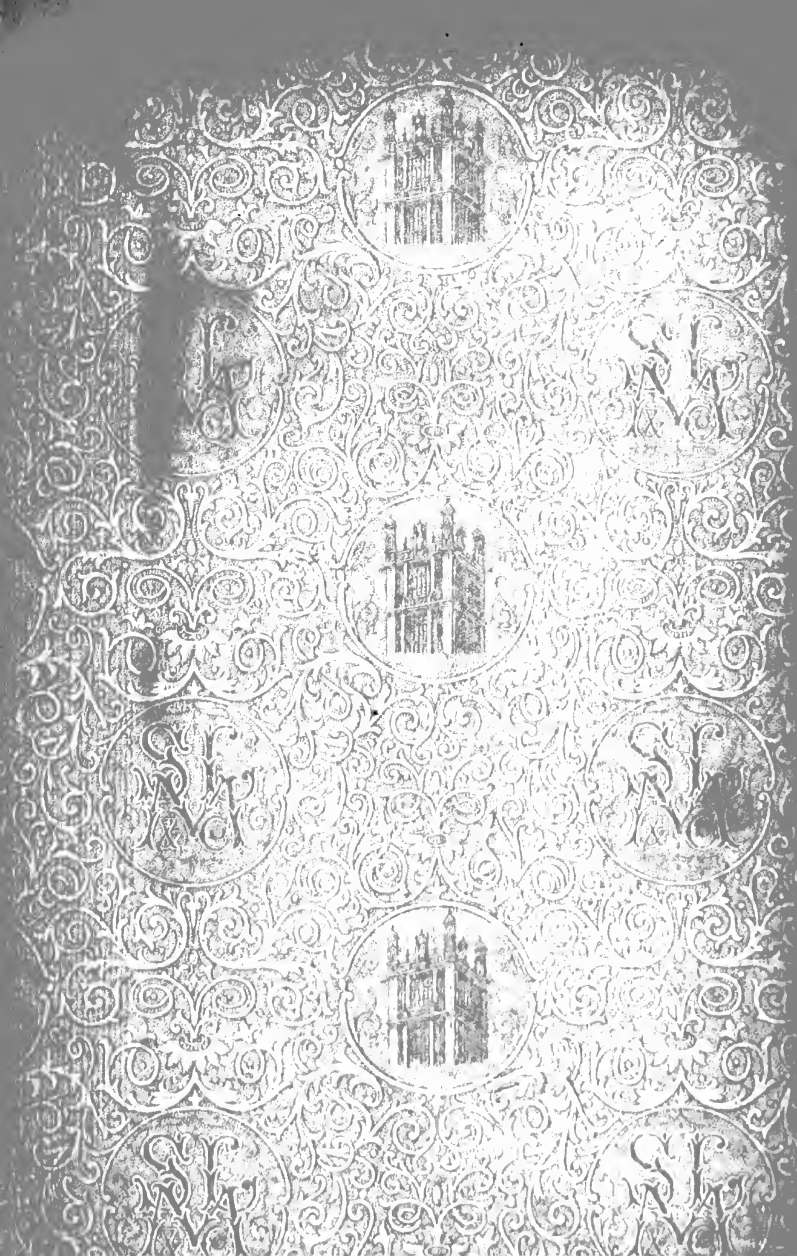
My engagements would not admit of this, otherwise nothing would have given me more pleasure than to eat a piece of Australian mutton with my saucy, handsome sailor-girl, Alice. Before going, she told me the savages had stolen her whistle!

The next voyage I made was to India. When I was again in Sydney, I learnt that Alice had died two months before the ship's arrival.

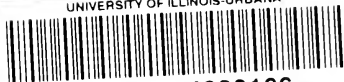
THE END.







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